MO SALAH • BOB PAISLEY • JAMES MILNER • JÜRGEN KLOPP • CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

# LIVERPOOLFC






## NABY KEITA

HOW HE'S GOT A WHOLE COUNTRY ROARING ON THE REDS




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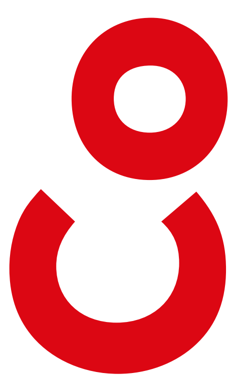






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new balance
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# TUNNEL VISION

The view that the players – and the manager – get when they're about to emerge onto the pitch from the Main Stand to warm up before the match. In this instance it's Arsenal at Anfield and another five-star performance is about to follow.





# LIVER BIRDS AND LOVE

Jürgen Klopp, for one, never underestimates the role that the fans can play at Anfield – as some choice extracts from his matchday programme notes reveal in this month's issue. Lots of top-flight stadiums now have fans waving flags before kick-off, but this has always been the real thing. And is there really anything cooler than a Liver Bird in a pair of trabs?





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## Peter Thompson (1946-2018)

Ask your dad, maybe even your grandad. What a winger, what a touchline-hugging, left-footed livewire back in the days of a cascading Kop and Bill Shankly's supermen winning two League titles and an FA Cup in three sensational seasons between 1964 and 1966. Signed from Preston North End for a then club-record £40,000, he made over 400 appearances for the Reds and scored 54 goals, including a famous strike against Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-final of March 1965. "His work-rate was outstanding, his fitness unequalled, his balance like a ballet dancer," said Shanks. YNWA.

# MAN AND BOY

Five hundred Premier League appearances down, loads more to come. James Milner, level-headed veteran and performance standard-bearer, tells it like it is




L.F.C.
Standard

**LAST MONTH YOU BECAME THE 13TH MEMBER OF THE PREMIER LEAGUE'S 500 CLUB – DID YOU EVER THINK YOU'D MAKE THAT MANY APPEARANCES IN A LEAGUE AS DEMANDING AS THIS ONE?**
Probably not. It's obviously a nice club to be involved with, but at this moment in time I just want to keep playing as well as I can and keep contributing as much as I can for Liverpool.

It would be nice to look back at the end of my career and think of the amount of games I've played in, but for the present I just want to keep doing as much as I can to perform well for Liverpool and help the club to be successful.

**YOU'VE HAD TO BE VERSATILE – YOU EVEN PLAYED TWO GAMES AT RIGHT-BACK DURING DECEMBER...**
Yes, I'm ticking the positions off one by one! I think there's only playing in goal that's left now. I played centre-half for Manchester City in a game at some point. So just goalkeeper's left! Touch wood, it doesn't happen, but if there's ever a need for it I'll put my hand up for sure.

**DO YOU THINK YOU'RE LIKE THE STEVE NICOL OF THE MODERN-DAY LIVERPOOL, AS IN SOMEONE VERSATILE ENOUGH TO BE ABLE TO PLAY IN EVERY POSITION?**
Maybe. As I say, I just want to contribute as much as I can. I have a position in midfield which I feel is my best role where I can contribute my best, but the team always comes first and you do whatever you can for the team.

You are only successful as a team and whatever the manager asks you to do, you do it to the best of your ability. Hopefully that's good enough for the team to go out and get three points each time we go out onto the field.

**IS THE PREMIER LEAGUE MUCH DIFFERENT FROM WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED AT LEEDS AND NEWCASTLE?**
A lot different. Everything about it, particularly in and around the training and the way training's done. There is an even greater attention to detail and the styles of play and the fitness roles have developed too.

The old days of having Sundays and Wednesdays off have gone and the team nights out have been reduced massively – there's a lot less days off. The Premier League was still an amazing league to be part of back when I started out, with amazing teams and amazing players. But the Premier League now has changed and still captivates people with how exciting it is. I feel lucky to have played in it as long as I have.

Everyone around the world loves watching the Premier League for what it is and how difficult it is game in and game out. You can be a couple of goals up and still the game's never safe. I think that's why everybody loves the Premier League – that unpredictability.

**YOU ARE THE ONLY PLAYER THAT STARTED JÜRGEN KLOPP'S FIRST GAME IN CHARGE AGAINST TOTTENHAM IN OCTOBER 2015 WHO IS STILL A REGULAR IN THE STARTING LINE-UP...**
I want to be a part of this football club and be successful with it. There have been players come in and out of the team since the manager came in and obviously the style of play's changed since he arrived as well. That's one of the hardest things for a footballer when you change managers. New managers come in and have their own opinion and you have to try and prove yourself all over again.

That's what you have to do as a player every day. You have to try and set that standard high and my role as one of the oldest guys in the squad now is to try and help the younger guys push on and help us all meet those standards and push us on as much as we can.

## I'M TICKING OFF THE POSITIONS ONE BY ONE! I THINK THERE'S ONLY PLAYING IN GOAL THAT'S LEFT NOW




MILNER
7
WHYTE AND MACKAY



Warming up for another 90 minutes of full-on football

**DO YOU SEE THE FIRST TEAM'S DEVELOPMENT AS AN EVOLUTION OR A REVOLUTION?**

I'd certainly say it is a progression. You can see how the team's improved. Over the last few years you could see that on our day we could beat anyone but maybe we haven't had that consistency. Now you can see the consistency coming more and more.

I think we have a good ability of being able to win games in different ways. If things aren't going well for us, we can grind it out, we can play in different styles and that's evidence of us developing as a team which is important.

It is a results business and in previous years we have not had that consistency. We have been able to play really well one week but then the next we wouldn't have looked like the same team.

Gradually we've got better and better at finding that consistency. It starts with the base and the foundation that we have starting from the goalkeeper and the back-four, but it's the full squad who have to buy into the defending and how we do that.

The defensive record's been a base for us this season. In games where maybe we haven't played as well as we can, we've still been able to nick a 1-0 and stay solid at the back. That's so important if you want to be successful.

**DID YOU BELIEVE THAT THIS SEASON, COMPETITIVE AS ALWAYS, THE TEAM WOULD BE TOP OF THE PREMIER LEAGUE GOING INTO THE NEW YEAR?**

I think you go into every season wanting to do as well as you possibly can. It's a nice position to be in, but we all know it's still very, very early and there are so many games to come.

Most importantly you can see that the team's improving again with the new signings having come in and settled well and there's still more to come from us as a team. I think that's the biggest thing.

Of course it has been a strong, solid start to the season but I think the best part about us as a side is that there are definite areas where we can still improve. It's good that we're in the position we're in knowing that we've not been absolutely flat-out. We can still improve and that's what we need to keep doing.

## IF YOU WANT TO BE SUCCESSFUL YOU HAVE TO PRODUCE EVERY SINGLE WEEK IN THE PREMIER LEAGUE

**YOU ARE THE ONE PLAYER IN THE SQUAD WHO HAS WON A PREMIER LEAGUE TITLE – DOES IT FEEL TO YOU THAT THIS TEAM HAS WHAT IT TAKES TO DO THAT?**

The biggest thing for us is that you want to get through the first part of the season and then through Christmas which is always a critical period in the season. If you get through Christmas and you're there or thereabouts, I think you have to be considered as challengers – but we also know how tough it is.

I know how difficult it is to win a Premier League and that's why everyone wants to win it. It's so special when you do achieve it because of that level of difficulty. There are 38 games where you have to deliver and be on your best form every week and that is a tough test. To be where we are at this moment in time says that we are a good team but there's a long, long way to go and I'm sure there will be ups and downs to come.

Since I've been here, I think you've seen the team getting better and better, seeing that consistency, seeing the team being able to win in different ways. This season we haven't played well in every game, but being able to deal with little blips and below-par performances and having that bit of luck which you always need and finding a way to win games is an important attribute. You can see how solid we are as a unit defensively and we've also seen the

manager change the team and deal with injuries.

Everything's there for us but of course it's very difficult. We're coming up against a lot of tough teams but the potential's there and hopefully we can continue moving forward and keep improving.

**IS THERE A DIFFERENT MENTAL EDGE?**

I think there's a confidence. Getting to a Champions League final helps. Obviously that game didn't turn out how we wanted it to, but it did help give us that belief of knowing that we are able to beat anyone on our day.

If you want to be successful you have to produce every single week and that's why it's so difficult to win the Premier League. You have to be on your mettle for the 38 games – playing against different types of teams in different types of weather conditions and at some grounds which are tight to the pitch and where the atmosphere's a bit more hostile. That's why it's such a great challenge because you're tested in so many different ways.

**WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS ON THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE DRAW AND TWO GAMES AGAINST BAYERN MUNICH IN THE ROUND OF 16?**

Every team you play in the Champions League is tough in the group phase, never mind the knockout stages. Bayern Munich are clearly a great team with lots of experience in the Champions League and a great history. Anyone we got at this stage was always going to be tough but, like we saw last season, you can gather some momentum in any cup competition.

I think that's especially the case at Liverpool – you can see what can happen when you get a bit of momentum on those European nights with the atmosphere the fans can create at Anfield. I'm sure the fond memories will come back from last year for us.

It's going to be difficult but we've been there before in those big games in the knockout stages of the Champions League and we've all done it as a group as well. It's one thing doing it as individuals with other teams but when you've done it together as a group, those fond memories and experiences help you as you go forward. There's a lot of football to be played before that first leg in February but when the Champions League come back round we'll be ready for it.


Late-afternoon training with the gaffer

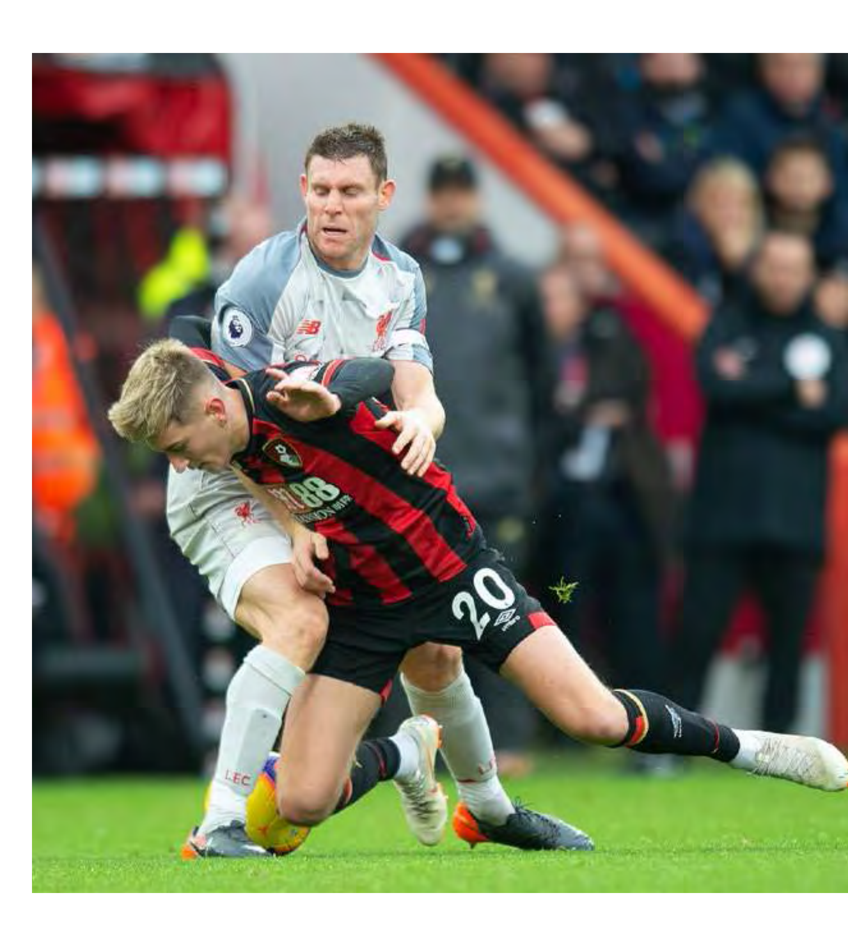
Scoring versus Burnley

**THE TEAM WON EIGHT GAMES OUT OF EIGHT DURING DECEMBER; THE PLAYERS MUST HAVE ENJOYED THE FESTIVE SCHEDULE AS MUCH AS THE FANS...**

I always enjoy it. I think it's so important to the football calendar in England. As players it is such a tough period with the amount of games you play and the travel and it's about balancing football and family but I wouldn't have it any other way and it's great to be involved in.

It's an amazing time to enjoy with the kids and the rest of the family, but as soon as you come to training and as soon as you're in the hotel before the game, you have to switch back into football-mode. I think one thing the group's done very well this year is focusing on each game as it comes and hopefully we can keep going.

The league table often changes with some teams having a good Christmas period and others maybe not getting the results they want. It's a vital time of the season and we understood as a group that we had to be 100 per cent concentrated on the football.



**YOU HAD TO SIT OUT A COUPLE OF THE GAMES WITH A HAMSTRING INJURY – HOW HARD WAS THAT FOR YOU?**

It was awful to be honest. I'm probably one of the worst people for watching a game of football. I'm shouting and changing the position I'm sitting in every two minutes, but that's part of being a team and wanting to do well. When you're on the pitch obviously you have some control but when you're off it – other than if you can help out in any way with the lads in the dressing-room before the game – your role ends. It's not nice but obviously the manager has to make the right decisions at times and we won those games which is the only thing that matters.

**EVERYONE IN THE SQUAD HAS DONE WELL THIS SEASON, NOT JUST THE ELEVEN WHO ARE STARTING – WE'VE MADE CHANGES DURING GAMES AND A NUMBER OF PLAYERS HAVE COME IN AND DONE REALLY WELL**

**HAS ANYBODY IN PARTICULAR IMPRESSED YOU THIS SEASON?**

It's hard to pick out one player because everyone in the squad has done so well, not just the eleven who are starting. We have made a lot of changes during games and a number of players have come in and done really well.

I think maybe one you could select is Alisson. Coming to a new league is never easy. It's a new lifestyle and you are also getting used to the weather and things like that, but he's been unbelievable: from how he is around the place, to how good he is on the pitch with his feet and with the saves he makes.

Every single player makes mistakes and sometimes as a keeper you maybe feel a bit different because mistakes often result in a goal, but if he makes a mistake it doesn't faze him in the slightest and he remains confident and continues playing as if nothing has happened. That's so important. He's been unbelievable for us this season so far and I believe that he'll be a massive, massive player for us going forward.





Another successfully converted spot-kick for the Reds


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## MAN OF THE MO

**Mohamed Salah: Confederation of African Football player of the year – again. Mo was also December's PFA player of the month, having scored six goals to help the Reds win all seven of their Premier League matches – a run that took them clear at the top of the table.**



*“We are Liverpool – there is no one on this planet that expects more of us than we expect of ourselves”*

So said Jürgen Klopp in the first LFC matchday programme of the 2018/19 campaign – turn over for more highlights from his much-loved manager’s notes this season

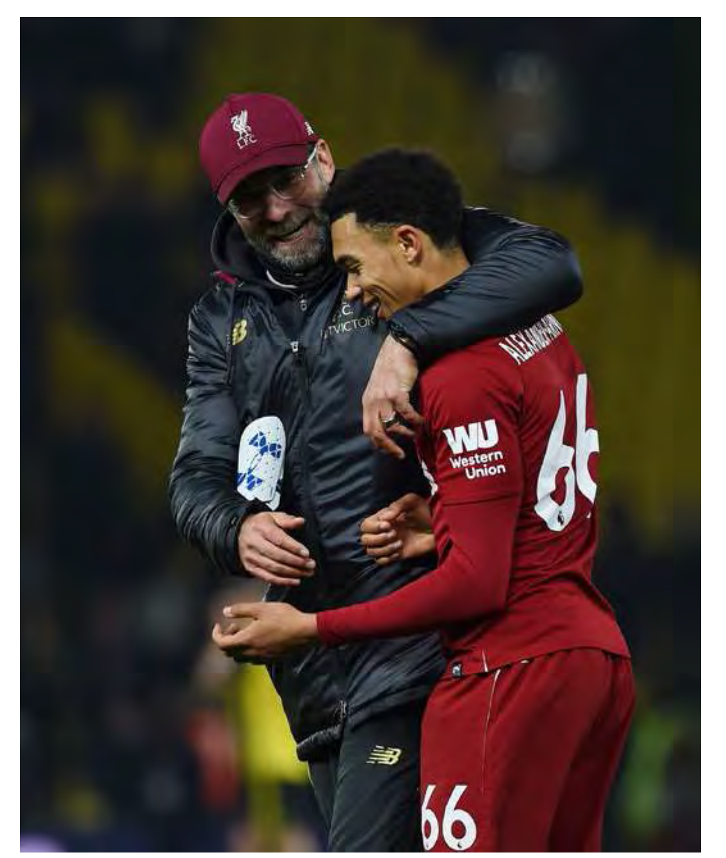



"We are still very much an insurgency – we are a club that has built season-on-season, we have shown a commitment to the development of our players and a commitment to coaching and training.

"All of the above only works if the players have the character and desire to buy into it – ours do! To be a Liverpool player you need special qualities as a person, as well as the ability – they have this! They must embrace the expectation and eagerness for success, even though it exists in the most competitive environment in world sport – and again they do it!

"This is why we have a chance and why we look forward to giving all we have from now until the last kick of the last game."

**LIVERPOOL V WEST HAM UNITED 12 AUG 2018**







"The players have received a lot of credit for their performance at Crystal Palace [won 2-0 on 20 Aug] and rightly so because they showed an attitude and a determination that allowed us to win without being at our best. The efforts of our supporters have not been similarly noted in most quarters but in the hours after the game it was something that the players and myself paid a lot of attention to.

"The atmosphere they created and the support they gave us at one of the most hostile away venues meant that at times it felt like we were playing a home game even though we were 200 miles away from Anfield. That kind of backing can only ever help us so I would like to thank all of our supporters who travelled to London on a Monday night just to help the team.

"I know many of you will not have got home until very late because of problems on the motorway but I hope what you saw at Selhurst Park made it worthwhile. This was definitely one of those occasions when the three points that were won were earned by everyone who was representing Liverpool Football Club in whatever way."

**LIVERPOOL V BRIGHTON & HOVE ALBION 25 AUG 2018**

"You achieve in football by focusing on the moment, the here-and-now. It's not that we forget our past or ignore the future – it's just that when preparing a game it is not useful."
**LIVERPOOL V PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN 18 SEPT 2018**







"I have spoken many times about staying 'angry' in the competitive sense. Today it is critical.

"Southampton come here to ruin our day. They come to stop our momentum. They come to win at our home. They come to take the points. But we have a say in whether they achieve their aim."
**LIVERPOOL V SOUTHAMPTON 22 SEPT 2018**

"It is easy to be with us when the wind blows in our direction, but our supporters are pushing us on and giving us positivity energy at all times."
**LIVERPOOL V MAN CITY 7 OCT 2018**






"Results-wise we are in a really good moment, but we know performance-wise there is improvement to come. Well, for me this is common sense but also a big positive.

"You develop, improve and find rhythm as seasons progress and develop. The best and most successful sides I have been involved with – including in my time at Liverpool – have always done this."

**LIVERPOOL V RED STAR BELGRADE**
**24 OCT 2018**

"This group of players have the laser focus of being successful for our club, our supporters, our team and themselves. They are willing to listen and learn and develop. They embrace the pressure and expectation that comes at Liverpool where you need to do all this while also winning. I love seeing how self-critical they are because it shows how much it matters."

**LIVERPOOL V RED STAR BELGRADE**
**24 OCT 2018**

"We are at our best, in football and in life, when we are joyful and spirited, when we are courageous and positive. My team and this club has these qualities in abundance. These are a group of players who embody the best values of football when it comes to finding the perfect mix of entertainment but also a winning mentality."



**LIVERPOOL V FULHAM 11 NOV 2018**



"I'm not interested even for one second in records or stats from the previous meetings. I'm not interested for one second about expectations or predictions. I'm not interested for one second who is favourite and who isn't.

"It's a derby: two clubs who share a city and are separated by metres. The intense desire to win is something we can guarantee every supporter inside Anfield will have. So for us as 'the team' it's about delivering: go and channel the positive energy of this encounter; take extra juice from it.

"These games make you run harder, jump higher and give beyond what sometimes you realise yourself is possible."

**LIVERPOOL V EVERTON 2 DEC 2018**




"One of our biggest developments as a club has been the relationship between the Anfield crowd and the team on matchday. The bond is as strong as I could wish for and it's been strengthened because there is trust in each other.

"The players know we have a knowledgeable support that responds to the moment – they see what is needed and they react in the best way. This has been so valuable in the last couple of seasons on our home turf in particular. The trust is mutual and that is why the feeling inside the stadium is always one of joyful anticipation now and not negative tension."

**LIVERPOOL V NAPOLI 11 DEC 2018**



"Anfield is centre-stage for the football world today [Liverpool v Man United]. But the big positive for us is that we also love occasions like this. We have shown when these moments come we grow taller and stronger also. So it's two giants going head to head, two pedigree heavyweights – very cool for people who are watching and love this game."
**LIVERPOOL V MAN UNITED**
**16 DEC 2018**

"I am running out of compliments for my players for how they are approaching the task in front of them. What impresses me most is how they are doing it with so little fuss. Their ability to focus and go again has so far been absolutely outstanding.

"That's their life at the moment: huge fixture followed by huge fixture. They have no time for distraction and as a group – led by our brilliant captain Jordan Henderson – they block out all the nonsense that doesn't matter."
**LIVERPOOL V MAN UNITED 16 DEC 2018**





"We have done outstandingly well until now, but it's been the players' ability to park all the thoughts of what's ahead and focus entirely on the moment that has brought us to this point. I think in sport is it known as 'tunnel vision' – that ability to block out everything else around you. So far we have demonstrated we have this quality and now we must continue with it."
**LIVERPOOL V NEWCASTLE UNITED**
**26 DEC 2018**



"As a coach or manager there isn't much you guarantee, but I know for a fact there will be more knocks and setbacks and we must remain alert. So far, we have shown the ability to absorb these moments, react to them and adapt. Let's keep doing this."
**LIVERPOOL V ARSENAL 29 DEC 2017**



"Team and supporters, giving their all for each other the 90-plus minutes; being smart, being passionate, looking to help bring energy and focus to each other. If we all do this then we can never have any complaints and we will know we have given ourselves the best chance to achieve something amazing together."
**LIVERPOOL V ARSENAL 29 DEC 2018**

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**GAME SET MATCHBALL**

Early December saw Mo score his first Liverpool hat-trick away from home, in the 4-0 win at Bournemouth. He kept the ball but gave his man-of-the-match award to skipper James Milner, who'd made his 500th Premier League appearance.

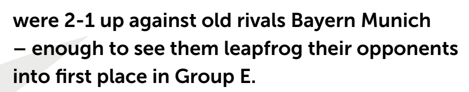
# LFC v FCB





## Liverpool against Bayern Munich in the last 16 of the Champions League – what the boss says and how our future foes have been faring

**It could conceivably have been Ajax drawn against Liverpool in this season's Champions League round of 16. Eighty-seven minutes had passed at the Johan Cruyff Arena on Wednesday 12 December 2018, the evening after Liverpool's tense 1-0 win over Napoli, and the Dutch giants**



**were 2-1 up against old rivals Bayern Munich – enough to see them leapfrog their opponents into first place in Group E.**




But Bayern won a penalty and the prolific Robert Lewandowski converted for his second goal of the night. Then substitute Kingsley Coman made it 3-2 to the visitors on 90 minutes before Ajax left-back Nicolas Tagliafico salvaged a draw five minutes into added-time. Three-three. FCB top on 14 points and into Pot A with the rest of the group winners.

Five days later at the draw in Nyon, Switzerland, guest-of-honour and former Reds striker Luis Garcia unfolded those little pieces of paper inside those tiny black-and-white footballs from that perspex UEFA bowl and pitted Bayern against Liverpool, two of last season's semi-finalists, in a last sixteen tie to be played at Anfield on Tuesday 19 February then the Allianz Arena on Wednesday 13 March.

The reaction from Bavaria? "Liverpool is the team of the hour," said former Bayern midfielder and the club's current sports director, Hasan Salihamidzic. "They are leaders in England, finalists last-time round, play good football, very physical, lots of 'gas'.

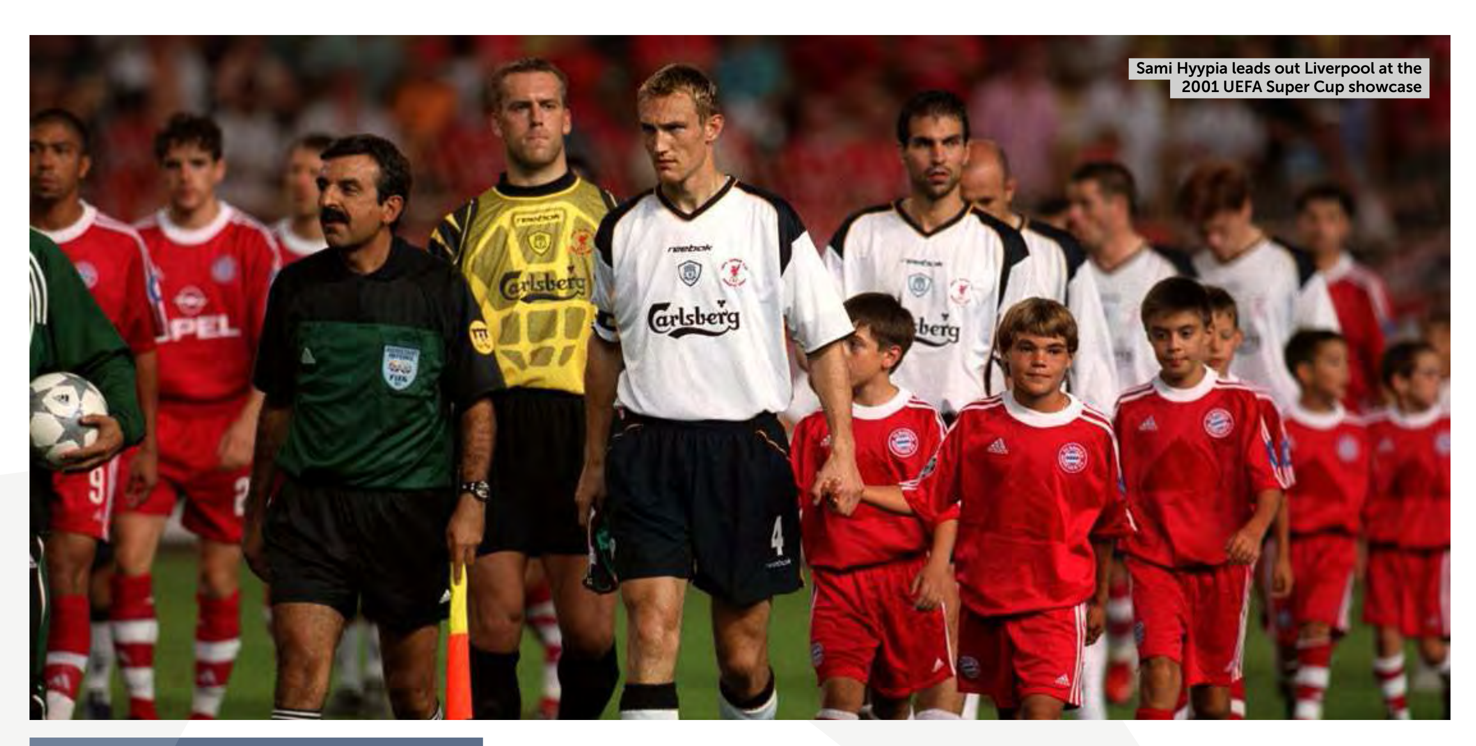
"You have to have two good days [against them]. Jürgen Klopp is a top coach. This is also a German duel on this level, very interesting."

Klopp has faced Bayern more than any other team in his managerial career: 29 matches with nine wins, four draws and 16 defeats.




Jürgen, then Borussia boss, with Bayern's Arjen Robben after the 2013 Champions League final

Kenny shoots during the first leg of the 1981 European Cup semi-final


Sami Hyypia leads out Liverpool at the 2001 UEFA Super Cup showcase

## THE OTHER TIES

**Schalke 04 v Manchester City – Royal Blues against Light Blues, with Schalke having sold Leroy Sane to City in 2016.**

Atletico Madrid v Juventus – Atletico are unbeaten in their last nine matches against Italian clubs (won seven, drawn two).

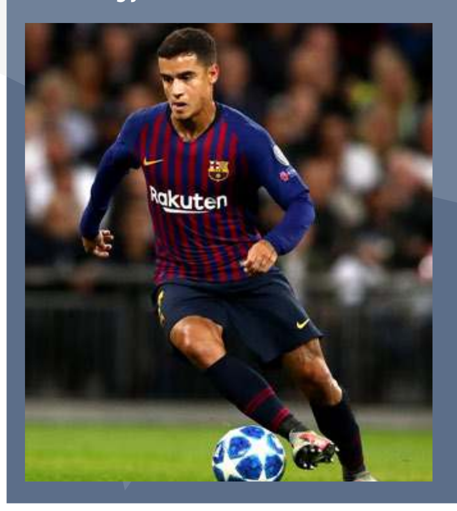
**Manchester United v Paris Saint-Germain – PSG's Di Maria formerly played for United; to date the two clubs have never met in a competitive game.**

Tottenham Hotspur v Borussia Dortmund – Spurs beat BVB home and away in the tournament's group stage last season.

**Lyon v Barcelona – Barca are unbeaten in six previous meetings, winning four and drawing two against the French side.**

AS Roma v FC Porto – two sides vanquished by LFC last season, with Porto having beaten Roma back in the 2016/17 play-off round.

**Ajax v Real Madrid – Real have won their last six games against the team from Amsterdam, scoring 20 goals and conceding just two.**



After the draw he told LFC's official website: "It was clear it would be difficult [and] they are obviously a top side.

"For me it's nice, going to Germany. But it's just the draw. So we have now time to prepare the game, a lot of time obviously, and hopefully we have all our players available then. It will be a tough one, an interesting one, and I am looking forward to it."

Six years ago a Borussia Dortmund team coached by Klopp and spearheaded upfront by Lewandowski met Bayern Munich in the 2013 final at Wembley, the same season that Liverpool under Brendan Rodgers bowed out of the Europa League to Zenit Saint Petersburg in the round of 32.

By then Bayern were already coveting the binge-scoring Lewandowski (who would indeed join them in another year's time) and had also announced that Dortmund's young midfielder Mario Gotze was to become the first major signing of imminent new boss Pep Guardiola, in the next close-season.

It added more spice, if it were needed, to a final which was decided by a last-gasp goal scored by Arjen Robben. Earlier Ilkay Gundogan had equalised from the spot after Robben had set up Mario Mandzukic's opener for Bayern on the hour. It was only Dortmund's second defeat to their rivals in eight matches.

Since then Klopp has faced Bayern once more, albeit in a pre-season friendly at the Allianz in August 2017 won 3-0 by the Reds.

The Liverpool boss says: "It's obviously long ago that I played Bayern in a competitive game, so I'm really looking forward to it... We all know the stadium and the atmosphere will be great.

"It's a really nice trip for all our supporters, it's a wonderful city, so that's all good. The flight is not too long and we obviously know more about German football than about any other league, that's true, but that doesn't make a big, massive difference.

"In the end the boys have to decide it on the pitch. Let's give it a try."

While Liverpool set the Premier League pace over Christmas, the winter-break in the Bundesliga saw Bayern in second place, six points behind Klopp's old club but with five wins on the bounce. Action resumes from Friday 18 January.

This season they are coached by Niko Kovac, the former midfielder who was in the Bayern side beaten 3-2 by Liverpool in the UEFA Super Cup showcase match in Monaco in August 2001. For the record John Arne Riise, Emile Heskey and Michael Owen got the goals for the Reds that night.

The clubs have met on three previous two-legged occasions. Liverpool famously won a European Cup semi-final on away-goals in April 1981. A decade earlier Bayern were victorious in a Cup Winners' Cup second-round tie in October/November 1971, progressing 3-1 on aggregate – six months after Liverpool had won a Fairs Cup fourth-round encounter 4-1 over two legs.

Back to the here and now and regarding potential new signings, clubs in the round of 16 can change their squads.

By midnight on 1 February 2019 they can register a maximum of three new players within an overall limit of 25. But no player can represent two clubs in the Champions League from the group stage onwards.



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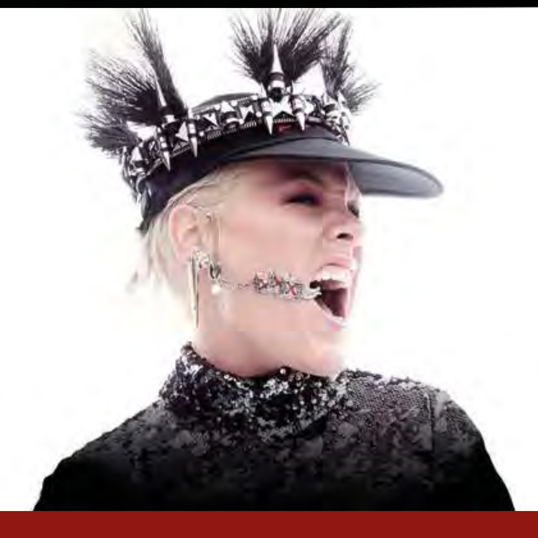
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# ONLY THE BRAVE




Ahead of the final group game at home to Napoli the permutations were many – but the resolute Reds simply did what they had to do

Anfield arrival: the first team coach pulls in






Doing pennants and (right) flying the flag



Redmen

Virgil tries a shot but he's offside

Another powerhouse performance from Gini

Tight angle, 'wrong' foot? Mo problem



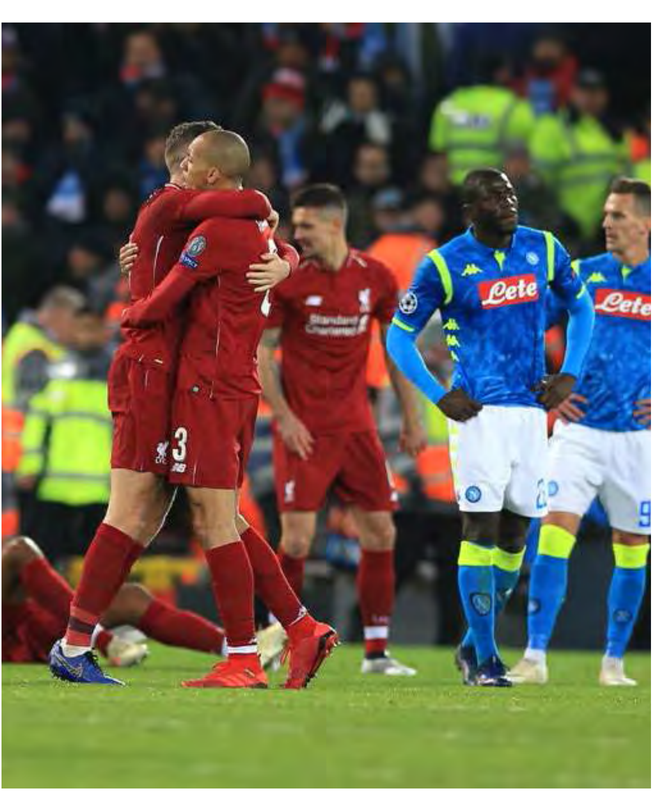









Alisson to the rescue with a point-blank reaction save






We did it! Onto the next stage

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## GOLDEN TOUCH

In the Christmas run-up Wolves became the 20th different side, of the 22 he's faced for LFC in the Premier League, that Mo has netted against when he turned Fabinho's cross into the net before creating the second for Virgil van Dijk.






# YAAASSSSS!!!

No club has scored more goals in the 90th minute or later to win Premier League games than Liverpool. Here are all 31 of them...

Words: Chris McLoughlin







01

## RONNY ROSENTHAL

**91st minute v Everton (Anfield) 20 March 1993**

Liverpool's first stoppage-time winner of the Premier League era came in the Merseyside derby at Anfield. The Everton defence appealed for offside when Ian Rush turned the ball into the path of fellow striker Ronny Rosenthal but Toffees left-back Andy Hinchcliffe was playing him on and Rocket Ronny fired a low shot past big Neville Southall at the Kop end to write his name into local folklore.






02

## ANDY BARLOW (og)

**91st minute v Oldham Athletic (Anfield) 16 Oct 1993**

Oldham had led at Anfield until the 87th minute when teen striker Robbie Fowler bundled home his first Premier League goal from Neil Ruddock's flick-on and there was worse to come for Joe Royle's side. Ruddock, sent upfront by manager Graeme Souness, collected Nigel Clough's cross and fired a low shot across goal that Andy Barlow turned into his own net.

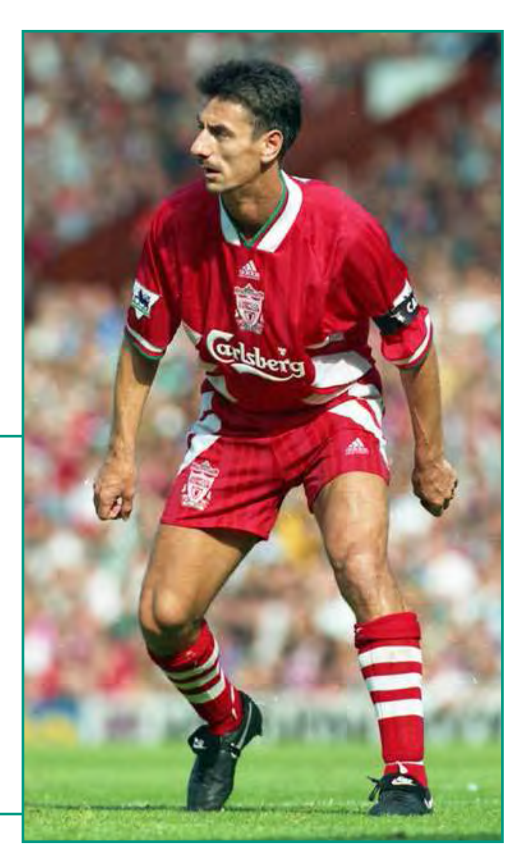


03

## IAN RUSH

**91st minute v Manchester City (Anfield) 22 Jan 1994**

In what proved to be Souness' last Premier League game as Liverpool manager, Rushie had cancelled out Carl Griffiths' early opener before he snatched a dramatic win. Rob Jones played a one-two with Steve McManaman down the right before running past Michel Vonk and delivering a cross to the far-post where the Welsh ace rose highest to head past Tony Coton.





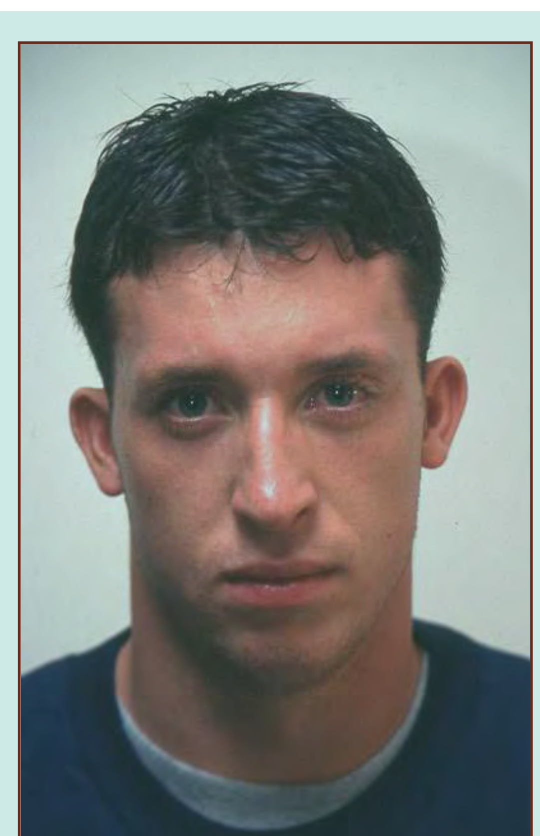



04

## ROBBIE FOWLER

**90th minute v Arsenal (Highbury) 12 April 1995**

The first of only three stoppage-time winners scored by Liverpool away from Anfield in the opening 16 seasons of the Premier League came from Robbie at Arsenal. With the Highbury clock ticking onto the 90th minute Steve McManaman ran at the Gunners defence, sat Martin Keown down on his backside, drew home keeper David Seaman and slipped the ball for Fowler to knock into an empty goal.



## 05 JAMIE REDKNAPP

**90th minute v Blackburn Rovers (Anfield) 14 May 1995**

A goal that almost won the league...for Manchester United! Kenny Dalglish's Blackburn went into the final day of season 1994/95 knowing an Anfield win would secure the title, but when John Barnes cancelled out Alan Shearer's opener and Jamie Redknapp curled home a 90th-minute free-kick it meant the title would go to Old Trafford if Manchester United won at West Ham. They drew 1-1.



## STAN COLLYMORE

**92nd minute v Newcastle United (Anfield) 3 April 1996**

Regarded by many as the Premier League's greatest-ever game as Roy Evans' Reds and Kevin Keegan's Magpies both chased the title, an end-to-end ding-dong affair was deadlocked at 3-3 in time-added-on when John Scales played a ball into midfield. Cue Martin Tyler: "Barnes, Rush, Barnes. Still John Barnes. Collymore closing innnnnnnnnn." Goosebumps. Every time.








## ROBBIE FOWLER

**92nd minute v Newcastle United (Anfield) 10 March 1997**

It seems incredible that just eleven months after beating Newcastle 4-3 at Anfield with a 92nd-minute goal, history would repeat itself, yet it did. The Reds were three-up to Kenny Dalglish's Magpies at half-time but three Newcastle goals between the 71st and 88th minutes looked to have earned the visitors an unlikely point...then Robbie Fowler headed Stig Inge Bjornebye's cross home to break Geordie hearts all over again.



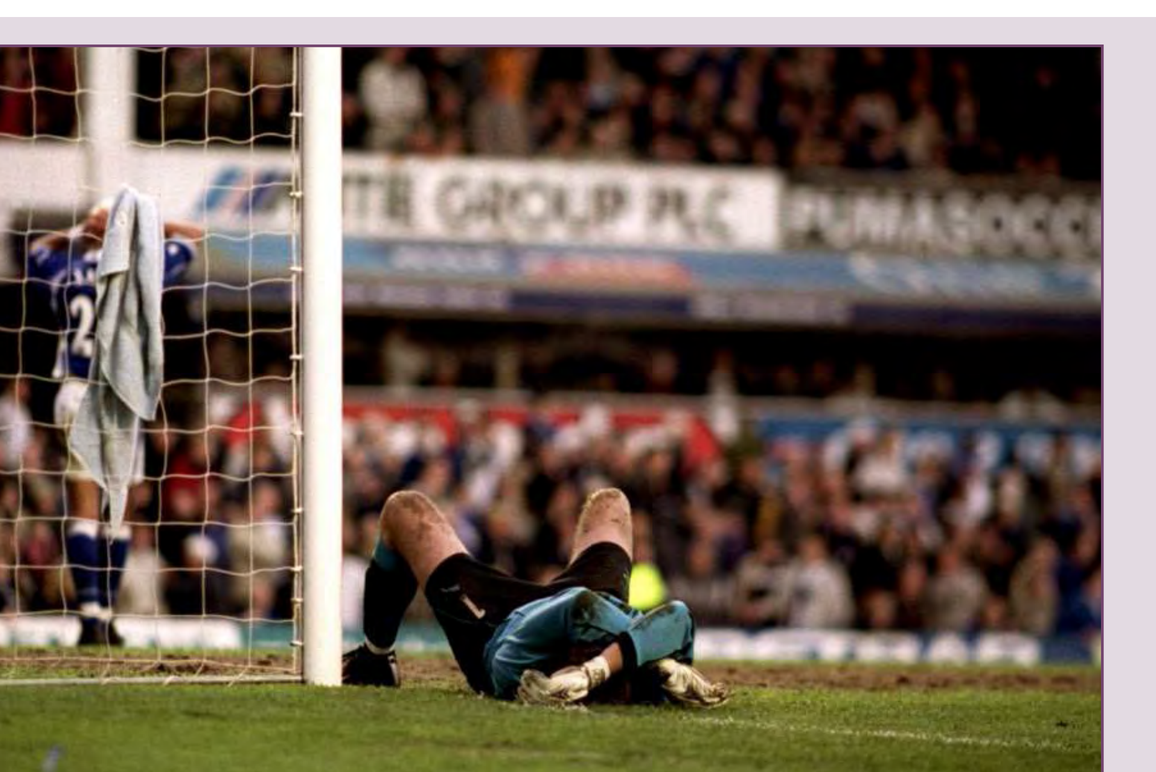



## STEVE McMANAMAN

**90th minute v Barnsley (Oakwell) 28 March 1998**

In a bonkers game in South Yorkshire the Reds somehow lost a 2-1 lead to nine-man Barnsley only for Steve McManaman to clip home a late winner before the Tykes had a third man dismissed. One home supporter took umbrage at referee Gary Willard's decisions and had to be wrestled to the ground by Barnsley's Jan Aage Fjortoft then the cops with the official even leaving the pitch during the second half for his own protection!






## GARY McALLISTER

**94th minute v Everton (Goodison Park) 16 April 2001**

Arguably Liverpool's most famous derby goal at Goodison Park. Manager Gerard Houllier's side were down to ten men when Gary McAllister stepped up to take a 94th-minute free-kick from 44-yards out. Everton keeper Paul Gerrard thought Gary Mac was going to cross the ball to the far-post but instead he shot at goal and beat the Blues keeper at his near-post to spark absolute scenes in the away-end.

## 10 VLADIMIR SMICER

**91st minute v Chelsea (Anfield)**
**24 March 2002**

Jerzy Dudek had kept Chelsea at bay with a brilliant first-half save from Mario Stanic and it looked like the game would end goalless until Vladi popped up with the winner. Jari Litmanen threaded a pass out to Emile Heskey on the left and after taking Mario Melchiot on, he crossed to the far post where Smicer – on for the injured Steven Gerrard – met the ball with a first-time volley that flew into the net. Sweet.







## 11 MICHAEL OWEN

**90th minute v Chelsea (Anfield)**
**6 Oct 2002**

The Reds enjoyed beating Chelsea 1-0 with a late winner so much that they did it all over again seven months later, only this time with a different scorer. With 89:02 on the clock Sky Sports commentator Martin Tyler said: "We've seen very little of Michael Owen today." Seven seconds later Owen was tapping the ball into the net after Emile Heskey's shot hit the post, prompting Tyler to add: "We've seen Owen now!"



## STEVEN GERRARD

**90th minute v Charlton Athletic (Anfield) 21 April 2003**

Easter Monday games are few and far between now but this one had two dramatic late goals. The Addicks had led since early in the second half until Sami Hyypia stabbed home an 86th-minute equaliser from John Arne Riise's corner before Steven Gerrard turned into Superman. Collecting the ball near to the corner flag he burst into the area, skipped past two tackles and curled a shot just inside the far post. Not all heroes wear capes.



13

## SAMI HYYPIA

**91st minute v Wolverhampton Wanderers (Anfield) 20 March 2004**

On a blustery afternoon against the leakiest defence in the Premier League the Reds just couldn't find a way through until Sami Hyypia went up for a 91st minute corner. Steven Gerrard swung the ball in and the giant Finn met it with his forehead on the edge of the six-yard box to secure three much-needed points that helped Liverpool finish fourth and qualify for the 2004/05 Champions League. Which went well.






## MILAN BAROS

**90th minute v Crystal Palace (Anfield) 13 Nov 2004**

On a weekend when Liverpool paid tribute to double European Cup-winning captain Emlyn Hughes following his death at the age of 57, Baros completed his only LFC hat-trick – the first treble at Anfield for three years – with a stoppage-time winner. It came from the spot after the Czech striker was fouled himself, with Baros keeping his cool despite trackie bottom-wearing goalie Gabor Kiraly trying to put him off.







15

## NEIL MELLOR

**92nd minute v Arsenal (Anfield) 28 Nov 2004**

We'll let our regular columnist talk you through this one: "Chris Kirkland kicked a free-kick long up the field and I challenged Patrick Vieira for the ball. It went over both of us towards Harry Kewell, who was barged into by Sol Campbell. As Harry hit the ground the ball bounced nicely in front of me and my instinct was to hit it. I was a long way out but thankfully I connected with it well and it flew past Jens Lehmann."





## DIRK KUYT

**92nd minute v Everton (Goodison Park) 20 Oct 2007**

A feisty Goodison clash ended with Everton down to nine men after Tony Hibbert and Phil Neville were sent off for conceding penalties. Hibbert's professional foul on Steven Gerrard gave Dirk Kuyt the chance to equalise a Sami Hyypia own-goal from the spot before Neville denied Lucas in stoppage-time with a handball on the goal-line. Kuyt stepped up and beat Tim Howard again to complete a memorable win.






17

## STEVEN GERRARD

**90th minute v Derby County (Pride Park) 26 Dec 2007**

The Reds turned in a woeful away display against a Derby side that had won just once and taken seven points from 19 games. It looked like the Rams would hold Liverpool to a 1-1 draw after Scouser Jay McEveley equalised following a Fernando Torres opener, but as the game moved into time-added-on Gerrard volleyed McEveley's goal-line clearance into the net, much to Rafa Benitez's relief.



18

## STEVEN GERRARD

**94th minute v Middlesbrough (Anfield) 23 Aug 2008**

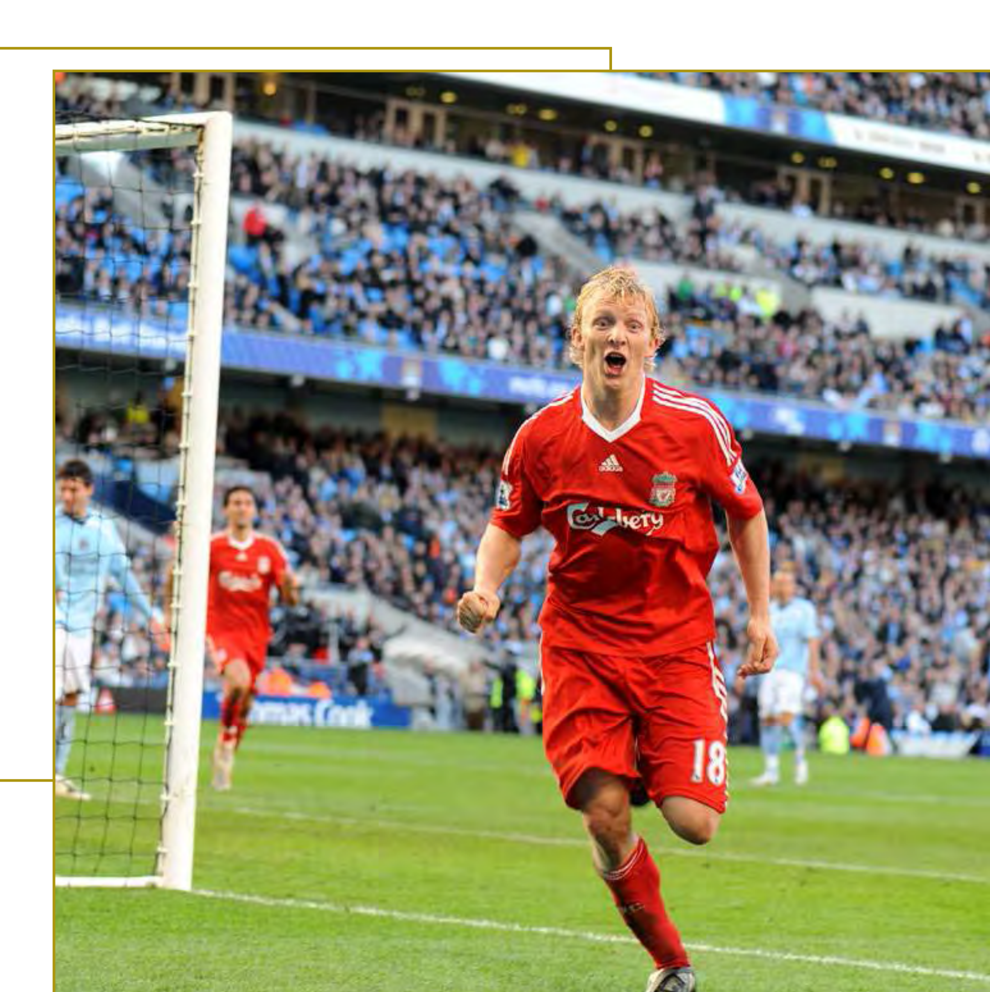
Mido's 70th-minute strike had Boro on course for a shock Anfield win in the Reds' opening home game of season 2008/09 only for a Scouse double to turn the game on its head. Jamie Carragher's deflected 85th-minute shot restored parity before Xabi Alonso's 94th-minute cross dropped kindly for Steven 18 yards out. Dirk Kuyt had an arm up in celebration as soon as Gerrard hit it. He wasn't disappointed!

19

## DIRK KUYT

**92nd minute v Manchester City (City of Manchester Stadium) 5 Oct 2008**

Rafa's Reds were two down at the interval but turned things around with a comeback that ended in a dramatic finale. Fernando Torres was at his goalscoring best, netting in the 55th and 72nd minutes, but it was Dirk that got the winner. The hard-working Dutchman was in the right place at the right time to convert Torres' deflected shot and send the travelling Kop behind the goal absolutely wild.



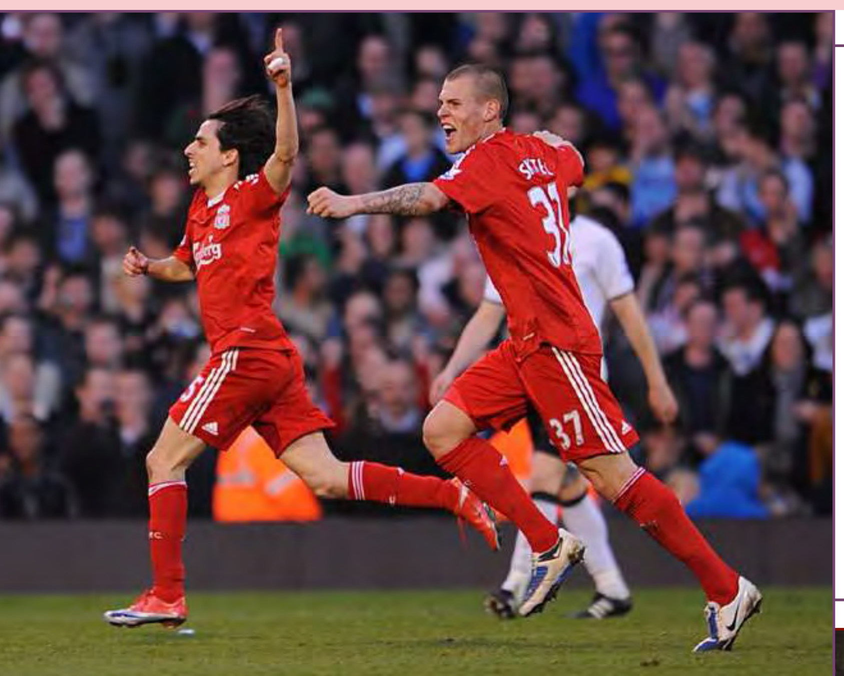


## FERNANDO TORRES

**91st minute v Portsmouth (Fratton Park) 7 Feb 2009**

Season 2008/09 must have been some kind of late-winner special as this was the third of four Premier League games the Reds won in added-on time. Fabio Aurelio and Dirk Kuyt had twice equalised Portsmouth goals but with the Reds facing a fourth draw in five games to harm their title-chances Torres headed home, following good work by Yossi Benayoun, to sink Pompey, three-two.







## YOSSI BENAYOUN

**92nd minute v Fulham (Craven Cottage) 4 April 2009**

Liverpool took 31 points from a possible 33 in the final eleven games of the 2008/09 campaign as they battled with Manchester United for the title, and although the Red Devils eventually finished top this late Yossi winner kept the momentum going with Rafa Benitez predicting that it could be the most important goal of the season. It was certainly a fantastic finish by the Israeli.



## FERNANDO TORRES

**93rd minute v Aston Villa (Villa Park) 29 Dec 2009**

On an absolutely filthy December night in Brum – when the combination of wind and sleet made 'Shiverpool' rather than Liverpool a more accurate description of Benitez's team – Torres made history. His 93rd-minute winner, after Gabby Agbonlahor deflected the ball into his path, was his 50th LFC league goal in his 72nd appearance, the quickest anyone has reached the half-century.





## JOE COLE

**92nd minute v Bolton Wanderers (Anfield) 1 Jan 2011**

Only 35,400 turned out at Anfield on New Year's Day 2011 to witness what proved to be Roy Hodgson's last home match as Liverpool manager and saw the game settled in stoppage-time by Joe's first LFC league goal. Kevin Davies and Fernando Torres exchanged strikes either side of half-time before an offside-looking Cole touched the ball in from close-range after Maxi Rodriguez nudged the ball into his path.






## 24 ANDY CARROLL

**91st minute v Blackburn Rovers (Ewood Park) 10 April 2012**

Maxi Rodriguez had the Reds 2-0 up after 16 minutes but then two Liverpool goalkeepers conceded penalties. Doni was dismissed for his foul on Junior Hoilett and although sub keeper Brad Jones saved the subsequent penalty on his league debut he later conceded one with Yakubu adding to his earlier goal to make it 2-2. All this only for Carroll to hurl himself at Daniel Agger's flick-on and head the winning goal.



## 25 STEVEN GERRARD

**91st minute v Fulham (Craven Cottage) 12 Feb 2014**

With the Reds in the thick of a four-horse title-race – only four points separated Chelsea, Arsenal, Man City and Liverpool after this game – a win on the banks of the Thames was vital. So when Brendan Rodgers' side were awarded a 90th-minute penalty for a foul on Daniel Sturridge with the score at 2-2, it was a test of Steven Gerrard's nerve. Up stepped the skipper to side-foot home before waving his shirt in celebration.







26

## STEVEN CAULKER (OG)

**95th minute v QPR (Loftus Road) 19 Oct 2014**

Liverpool led one-nil until Eduardo Vargas equalised in the 87th minute before a stoppage-time goalfest with *three* strikes in added-on time. Philippe Coutinho thought he'd won it with a curling 90th-minute strike only for a 92nd-minute corner to deflect in off Steven Gerrard. The home fans celebrated but there was a sting in the tail when Raheem Sterling's pass to Mario Balotelli struck Rangers defender Steven Caulker for a 95th minute oggy.





27

## ADAM LALLANA

**95th minute v Norwich City (Carrow Road) 23 Jan 2016**

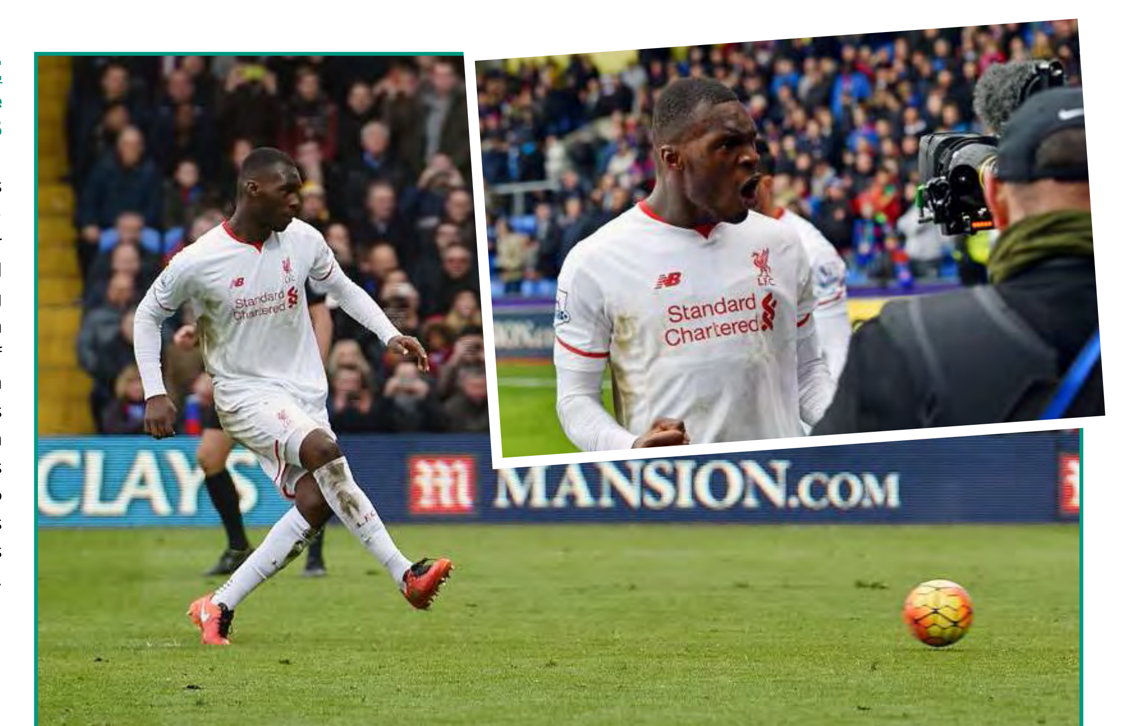
One-nil up, three-one down, four-three up. It was quite an opening 74 minutes in East Anglia but the real drama was yet to come. Norwich's Sebastian Bassong lashed home a left-footed drive to make it 4-4 in the 92nd minute but with on-loan centre-half Steven Caulker causing havoc as an emergency striker, the ball dropped for Lallana to volley in with Jürgen's glasses broken during the manic celebrations!

28

## CHRISTIAN BENTEKE

**96th minute v Crystal Palace (Selhurst Park) 6 March 2016**

Benteke's penalty was Liverpool's first-ever 96th-minute winner in a Premier League game and the second of five stoppage-time winning league goals under Jürgen Klopp's management, all of them coming in the 94th minute or later. The Reds were a goal down and a man down following James Milner's dismissal, but Roberto Firmino equalised before Benteke was tripped in the box and kept his composure from the spot.





## SADIO MANE

**94th minute v Everton (Goodison Park) 19 Dec 2016**

A Monday-night goal so celebrated that Kopites reworked Shakin' Stevens festive classic *Merry Christmas Everyone* to send glad tidings to all, Sadio was the match-winning hero of the 227th Merseyside derby. Substitute Daniel Sturridge weaved his way across the penalty-area before slightly scuffing a shot that struck a post and Mane reacted quickest to stab the ball home.







## RAGNAR KLAVAN

**94th minute v Burnley (Turf Moor) 1 Jan 2018**

Liverpool kicked off 2018 at a typically wintry Turf Moor where Raggy made history by becoming the first Estonian to score in the Premier League. Burnley looked to have nicked a point when Johann Berg Gudmundsson cancelled out Sadio Mane's goal in the 87th minute but with 94 minutes on the clock Dejan Lovren headed Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain's free-kick across goal for Klavan to bundle the ball home.



## DIVOCK ORIGI

**96th minute v Everton (Anfield) 2 Dec 2018**

Never before had a 96th-minute winning goal been scored in a Premier League game at Anfield but Divock Origi put that right with one of the most unusual goals in Merseyside derby history. Virgil van Dijk's miscued volley looked to be harmlessly sailing over and out, but Everton keeper Jordan Pickford pushed the ball back onto the crossbar and looked on in horror as Origi pounced to head home. Pandemonium!




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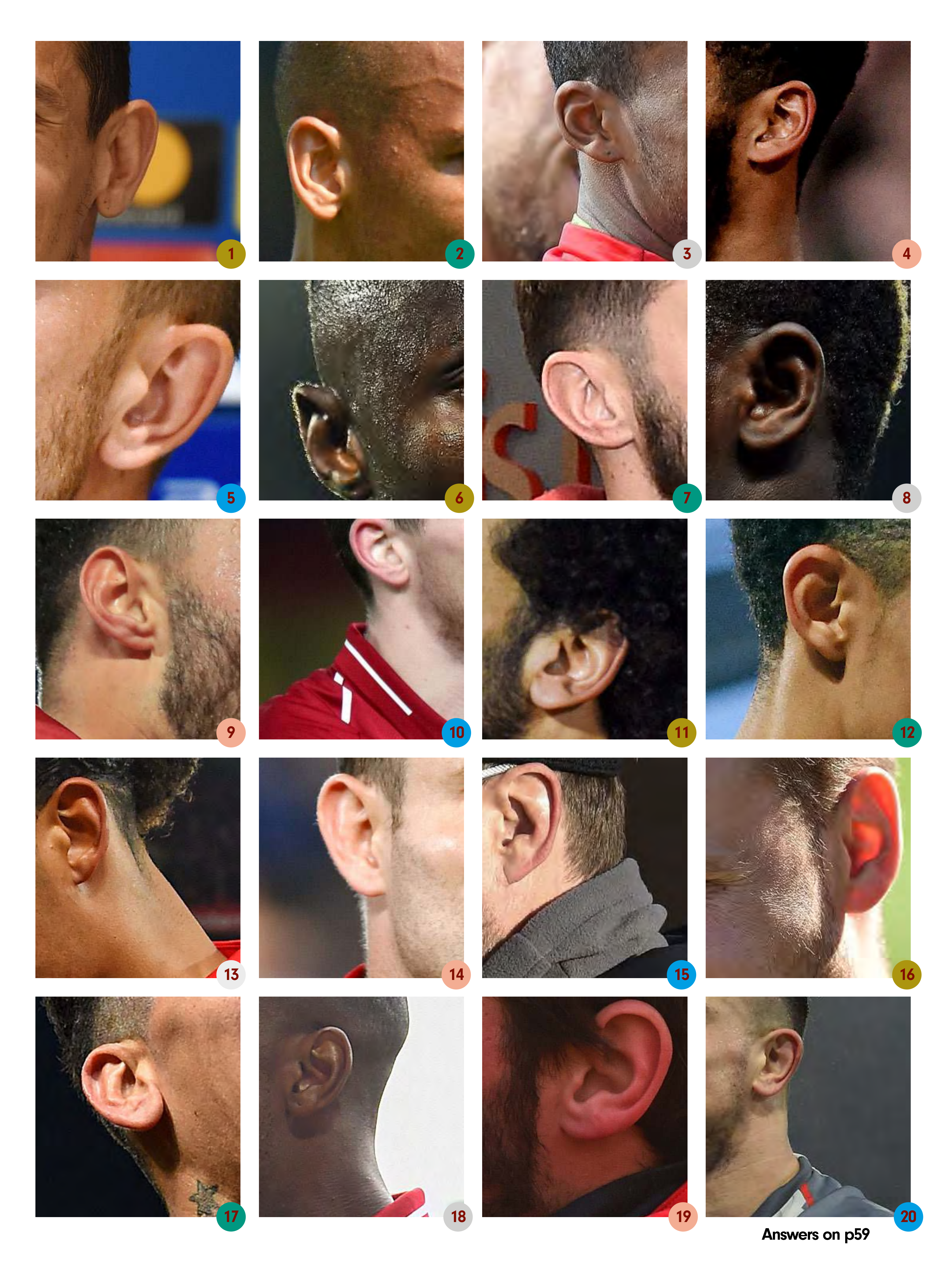



## MO SHOWER

His goal in the Molineux rain, a split-second of world-class improvisation with the outside of his boot, was Mo's fourth in two consecutive away games and meant that he'd scored in each of his past six Premier League appearances against newly-promoted opposition, finding the net once in each game.

# THEY'RE ALL EARS!

Listen up Reds, sounds like you've got a picture quiz or two over these next four pages, you hear? But let's not drum on about it...




Answers on p59



# OL' BIG EARS!

We kick back into action in the Champions league in February so as a little teaser can you name who's got hold of that lovely cup in the pictures?




(a) The green sleeves give this one away

(b) In bed with the European Cup – remember who?

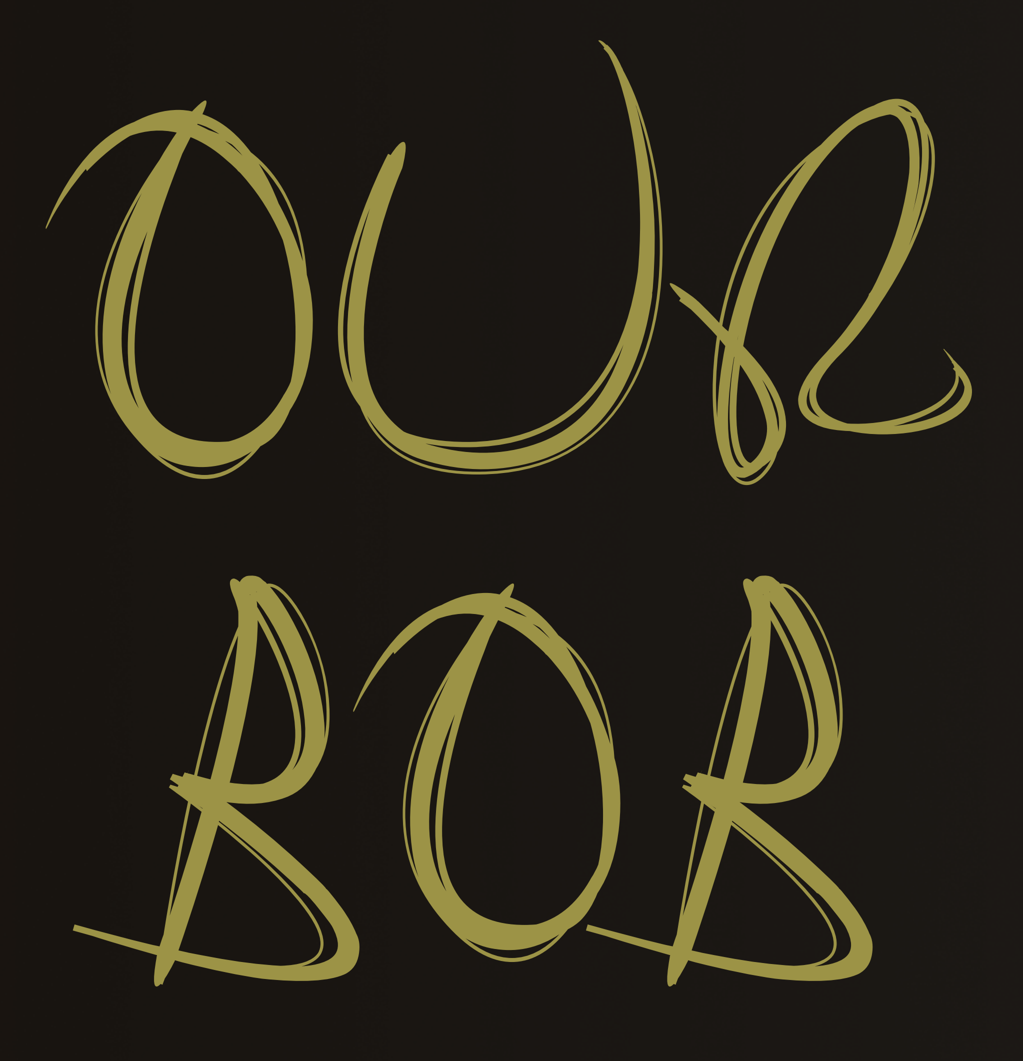
(c) Shirt lettering and captain's armband are the big clues here

(d) Smokin' allowed in the Stadio Olympico

(e) Czech his eyes

**ANSWERS: They're All Ears:** 1. Dejan Lovren; 2. Fabinho; 3. Gini Wijnaldum; 4. Joe Gomez; 5. Jordan Henderson; 6. Naby Keita; 7. Adam Lallana; 8. Sadio Mane; 9. Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain; 10. Andy Robertson; 11. Mo Salah; 12. Trent Alexander-Arnold; 13. Virgil van Dijk; 14. James Milner; 15. Jürgen Klopp; 16. Simon Mignolet; 17. Roberto Firmino; 18. Daniel Sturridge; 19. Alisson Becker; 20. Xherdan Shaqiri!

**Ol' Big Ears:** (a). Ray Clemence; (b). Kenny Dalglish; (c). Phil Thompson; (d) Joe Fagan; (e). Vladimir Smicer.




Celebrating the 100th anniversary of Bob Paisley's birthday with a gallery of timeless images

**Five years ago this magazine ran a countdown feature over a few issues entitled *120 Men Who Made LFC*. Talk about esteemed company for the top ten: in no particular order, Elisha Scott, Billy Liddell, Tom Watson, Steven Gerrard, John McKenna, Kenny Dalglish, John Houlding, Bill Shankly, the 12th Man (as in the fans)...and Bob Paisley.**

In such esteemed company Bob actually came in at sixth. But positions hardly matter in this pantheon of LFC greats. The fact is, no one has served the club in such a plethora of roles, with such distinction, over such a sustained period.

Born in County Durham on 23 January 1919, due to football's wartime suspension he was 28 by the time he enjoyed a full debut season as a half-back with the Reds, winning the country's first post-WW2 top-flight championship that same 1946/47 season.

Upon hanging up his playing boots in 1954 he joined the backroom staff and masterminded a first Central League title two years later for the 'second-string' or reserves team.

It was a taste of things to come. Following a lengthy stint as Bill Shankly's right-hand man (1956-74) he was a reluctant successor to the top job but would enjoy even greater success.

Nine years, 19 major trophies. Bob was a man of few words, shy in public and close to just a few in the media, but as a manager he was wonderfully canny and astute and phenomenally successful.

Paisley's Reds won the European Cup in 1977, 1978, and 1981 – along with Zinedine Zidane at Real Madrid he's still the only boss to claim the magnificent trophy three times with the same club – and he also led Liverpool to six of their 18 top-flight titles plus three League Cup triumphs and the UEFA Cup in 1976.

Bob passed away on 14 February 1996, aged 77, survived by his wife Jessie (who died in 2012), two sons and a daughter. He is remembered in the hearts of Liverpool supporters everywhere, celebrated with a flag on the Spion Kop, and honoured by bronze plaques on stone piers either side of the the eponymous Gateway at Anfield showing a sculpture of Bob in relief and a roll-call of his many managerial honours.

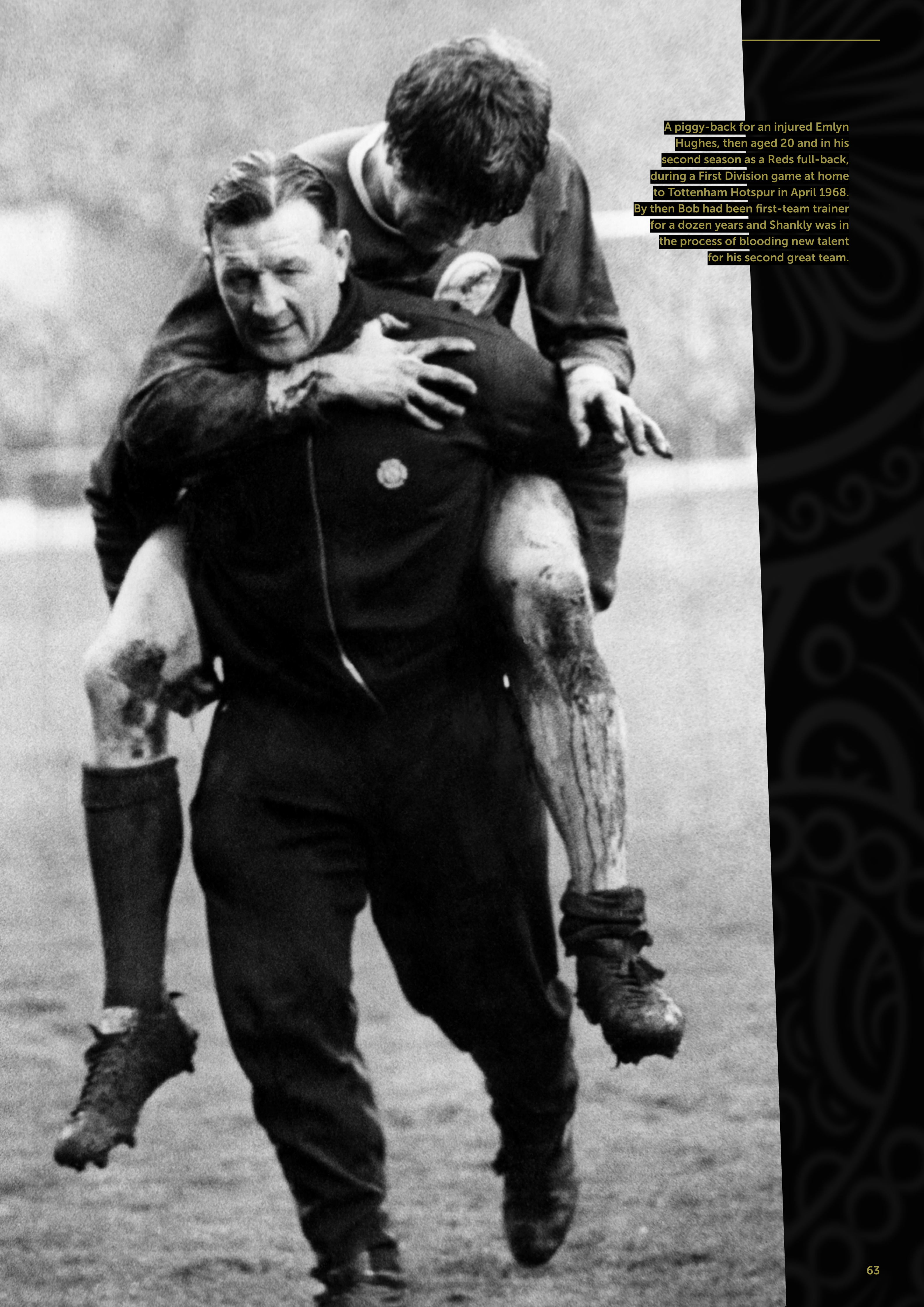
Truly, a Liverpool FC legend.





Back-row, fourth-from-right in the 1946/47 title-winning team. Bob played on the left of a defensive-midfield pairing in a 3-2-2-3 or 'W-M' formation so-called because of its shape, and he was noted for his toughness and long-throw.

April 1963: Bob, now first-team trainer, listens to the draw for the semi-finals of the FA Cup with Bill Shankly, coach Reuben Bennett and the club's assistant-secretary Bill Barlow, on 'the wireless'. The Reds will get Leicester and lose 1-0 but finally win the trophy two years later.



A piggy-back for an injured Emlyn Hughes, then aged 20 and in his second season as a Reds full-back, during a First Division game at home to Tottenham Hotspur in April 1968. By then Bob had been first-team trainer for a dozen years and Shankly was in the process of blooding new talent for his second great team.



King of the Kop, July 1974. This shot was taken two weeks after Shanks had shook the football word with his retirement. In his first matchday programme notes Bob wrote: "I know the task I have taken on, in following Bill, but I hope and believe I can shoulder the responsibility… We are in the market for trophies again."

Edge-of-stage at the 1977 European Cup homecoming in Liverpool. Sportswriter Ian Herbert says his 2017 biography of Bob entitled *Quiet Genius* "attempts to show that his lack of ego brought rich value. Paisley spoke less and listened more. He understood the value of quietness more than any manager."



Paisley never forgot his roots. In September 1977 he returned to his birthplace of Hetton-le-Hole with some very familiar silverware. "He was very good when he brought the cups here in 1977," recollected one old neighbour, Joe Lormore. "He went round and showed everyone, took his time and shook hands."

Presiding over the signature of Kenny Dalglish, formerly of Celtic and the striker who would replace Kevin Keegan and then some as the Kop's new idol, for a British record fee of £440,000 in August 1977. It proved to be a masterstroke by Bob, chairman John Smith (left) and club secretary Peter Robinson.



Bob in his element, among the Boot Room boys, on Tuesday 8 May 1979 following a 3-0 win over Aston Villa which secured the club's eleventh top-flight title with two games to spare. Suited-and-booted, left-to-right: Ronnie Moran, Roy Evans, Bob, Tom Saunders, Joe Fagan and John Bennison.



On the Parc des Princes pitch at full-time on Wednesday 27 May 1981, and typically bashful as he acknowledges the 1-0 victory over Real Madrid which secured a third European Cup for Liverpool under his management. Another 37 years would pass before another manager would emulate the feat with one club.




**CLASS IS PERMANENT**

"Maybe last season when Mo didn't have a good game he still scored," says team-mate Gini Wijnaldum. "People see that and say, 'Ah, he played good', but now if he's not scoring they say he's in a difficult situation. I never see it that way – he still works hard, he still creates chances. He is a top, top player."

# CAPTAIN KEITA

Midfield ace Naby Keita discusses his pride in skippering his country to this year's Africa Cup of Nations finals

Interview: William Hughes

**Think back to 2017 when Liverpool FC's early-year campaign dovetailed with the Africa Cup of Nations.**

A one-nil win over Manchester City on New Year's Eve had seen the Reds go into 2017 sitting second in the Premier League, with summer signing Sadio Mane enjoying a fine start to his Anfield career with eight goals. He added his ninth goal of that debut campaign in a 2-2 draw at Sunderland on 2 January before leaving to fulfil his international commitments with Senegal at the Cup of Nations in Gabon.

That triggered a challenging January for Liverpool. By the time Mane returned from the tournament to figure as a second-half substitute in the final game of the month, a 1-1 draw against Chelsea, the Reds had slipped to fourth position in the table, gone out of the League Cup in the semi-finals to his former club Southampton and also bowed out of the FA Cup at home to Wolves. Earlier they'd needed a third-round replay to see off Plymouth Argyle having been initially held at home by the League Two side.

As well as having to deal with Mane's absence, Liverpool were also unable to call upon Joel Matip until FIFA made a ruling on 20 January 2017 about his availability. The centre-back insisted that he had retired from international football but was named in Cameroon's provisional squad.

All of which means that the Reds will have been delighted when it was announced in the summer of 2017 that the 2019 edition of the tournament will take place in June and July. It means that Mane and midfield man Naby Keita can focus fully on their commitments to Liverpool before turning their attentions to representing their countries in the summer.

Keita, who really started to make an impact in the Reds midfield during December, is pleased that is the case.

"I think it's great that this decision has been taken and the fact that it's going to move to the summer is going to help us [African players] a lot," he says. "It's really positive. It will help us and it will help the club as well because it will mean we won't be missing so many games.

"From a point-of-view of both maintaining regular form and, in my case, the settling-in process over the full season, it's really, really positive because we won't have any break in the continuity."

Guinea, runners-up in 1976, did not reach the AFCON finals in




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BETVICTOR

Ready to rumble: arriving at Anfield on matchday

2017. But this time, under Keita's captaincy, they have reached the finals with a game to spare. Victory in their final qualification game away to the Central African Republic in March will see them top a group that also includes Ivory Coast and Rwanda.

A 1-1 draw at home to the Ivorians last November sealed their place in the finals after a campaign that started with a 3-2 win away to the same team in June 2017 with Keita grabbing the winner.

"It's great that we are actually qualified," says Keita, who was named in the Best African XI for 2018 at a ceremony in Senegal on 8 January. "Everyone in the country was very, very sad last time when we didn't make it. I got a lot of stick myself and people criticised me because I am almost the figurehead of the team.

"I was playing in the Bundesliga in Germany so I was someone who played at the highest level, so people were angry with me. I defended myself and said, 'Look, there's a squad of 23 and we have always said that we win together and lose together' and that we were all responsible in good times and bad. Still, I felt that I had to defend myself, and as skipper I really felt that failure to qualify. The responsibility falls at my feet and that's what it can be like in Africa."

Mane will also join Keita at the Africa Cup of Nations next summer. Senegal, who bowed out to Cameroon on penalties in the quarter-finals in the 2017 tournament, confirmed their place with a 1-0 win at Equatorial Guinea in November. The 'Lions of Teranga' will seal top spot in their qualification group if they defeat Madagascar at home when they meet in March.

Since March last year Keita has been working with a new coach with his country who are dubbed the 'National Elephants'. Belgian manager Paul Put has vast experience in international management having previously taken the reins of Gambia, Burkina Faso, Jordan and Kenya.

Keeping the Wolves at bay


Intensity in training

The Reds ace appreciates the common-sense approach he has taken since taking over from Lappe Bangoura.

"I think it's fair to say that African football is still quite direct, perhaps a bit like how English football was before so many foreign coaches came here and introduced different ideas.

"Our football can be more physical and direct. He [Put] watches me play for Liverpool a lot and he's really good with me because he recognises that you are often coming to the national team from a busy fixture calendar and lots of training sessions.

"He doesn't overload us in training so when we're preparing for games, we'll tend to do more tactical work and lots of work with the ball and looking at the opposition. It's different in the sense that you're putting in the physical work while you are at your club whereas on international duty it's more fine-tuning."

Keita's summer move to Anfield has resulted in huge interest in the Reds throughout Guinea. He admits that when Liverpool are in action the atmosphere around Conakry, the capital city where Keita was born, and the country as a whole is similar to that when the national team are in action.

"It's an absolutely unbelievable thing because the way people get in front of the TVs when Liverpool play, you'd think it's almost like when our national team is playing.

"I'm the only Guinean player who is at a top club so I have to work really hard. Everyone believes in me back home so not only do I have to do my job here for all the fans at Liverpool, but I've got to do it for the whole of my country back home. I've been told that if the fans back in Guinea have all switched on their TVs and I'm not in the starting eleven, sometimes they can be angry and frustrated!"

With the 23-year-old becoming more acclimatised to the Premier League with each passing week, that's looking less like being a problem. Naby played briefly with Mane at RB Salzburg in 2014 before the Senegalese's switch to Southampton and says the presence of the no10 at Melwood has accelerated his settling-in process. "Last year I spent some of the winter-break at RB Leipzig watching a lot of English football on television, particularly Liverpool because my mate Sadio was here."

It is no surprise therefore that Keita, like legions of Reds around the globe, was delighted by the news that Mane had penned a long-term contract with the club.

"It's fantastic that he's signed and I'm very, very happy because clearly he brings a lot to the club and the team. On occasions, a player like Sadio can win games on his own and he's an important part of this team.

"He is 26 now and I know that he gave it a lot of thought before signing again. So, looking forward, it's a real positive that he has committed for the next few years.

"He understands that we've got a great group of players and knows that this is a team not just for the present but for the future as well. I think that was all uppermost in his mind when he was making his decision – the fact that the future looks very promising."



Brilliant against Burnley


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## GUNNING FOR GUNNERS

Mo fires off a shot in the 5-1 home win over Arsenal on 29 December. He scores from the spot after being upended in first half stoppage time but later in the game generously lets team-mate Bobby Firmino convert a second penalty to complete his own hat-trick on the day.



Picture courtesy of thisfangirl.com



# COME ON CHELCEE!

Meet the Liverpool-born attacker who scores goals for Fulham Ladies and hopes one day to perform in front of the Kop – as a singer-songwriter

Interview: William Hughes






**First up Chelcee, how did you get into football?**
I grew up in Aigburth by Liverpool Cricket Ground in a street where there were only boys, so if I wanted to play out I had to be good at football basically. I got good pretty fast – better than the lads!

I went to an Ian Rush Soccer School and that's where I was scouted, I was the only girl. My granddad saw an article about it in the paper and cut it out, and I went down to Liverpool University which was where Liverpool Ladies trained at the time. Someone saw me and gave me a trial, I was about 10 at the time. So it all came about from Ian Rush and his soccer school!

**Of course the professional era of women's football was still some way off...**
Exactly. If I had been a lad I might have been a professional now. Unfortunately all the girls in the Liverpool Ladies first-team at the time had another job and it was just unlucky for me that my other job was music – something that you have to give your whole self to as well.

Music is like football in that you've got to throw yourself into it and really 'grind' and get yourself about, so there was just no way I could do both at the same time. So I left the team at 16 to follow a career in music.

Then after I had been quite successful as a songwriter I watched the last Women's World Cup [in 2015] and there were quite a few of the girls in the England team that I used to play with. It just made me hungry to get back into it, so I went for a few trials at Tottenham, West Ham, Wimbledon and Fulham.

I played for Spurs for a season but then they got promoted to FA WSL 2 last year so I had to drop down a league again to be able to continue to do my music at the same time. I joined Fulham and it's been brilliant. We get treated really well and hopefully the men's team can start winning now with Claudio Ranieri in charge. I hope that they can stay up.

**Who was your footballing hero?**
Stevie G – not for the way that he played because he threw himself into a few more tackles than I do. I'm a bit more like Philippe Coutinho where I try to avoid those tackles! It was funny because I mentioned Stevie in another interview saying how he was an inspiration. He liked the story on Instagram so he knows I exist which is good! I play as an attacking midfielder, a no10. I've scored a few goals this season and I've been really enjoying my game.

**How excited are you by the men's team this season?**
We're flying. As soon as Klopp came in, I've always believed in him. Last season I thought we were good but we were dropping silly points against teams that we should be beating, which has always seemed to be our way. We'd go and beat a top team away from home and then drop points against one of the mid or lower-ranked teams.

There are never any easy games in the Premier League but I think that if you do want to win the league, you have to pick up points in those games and so far we have been doing alright so I'm excited. I think we can do it but I say that every year!

Hopefully in my time I'll be able to see the club finally win the league because I haven't seen them do that yet. I've been going the game since I was a kid and I always try and get down to watch every time I'm in town. My uncle owns a bed-and-breakfast on Anfield Road called the Soccer Suite where people go in the build-up before the game, so I'm always in and around it when I can go.

**Back to the music, you suffered an early setback when you were dropped by your first record label...**
I have referenced Istanbul when I think back to that – you know, about having that never give up mentality. Although I haven't seen the Reds lift the Premier League yet, there have been other successes, most notably Istanbul. As I say, football is very similar to music and it's instilled the mentality into me that it is only half-time. At 19 you can't think it's all over.

Look at Mo Salah, he went to Chelsea and it didn't work out – now look at him. Music's very much like that. The guy who signed me had got sacked and the new manager came in. Like football, if you're not his player it's rare that you get a good start so if you are let go, you have to go somewhere else.

At times I looked at it like that when I went into becoming a songwriter. It was like going into another league or joining another club so that then I could prove myself to come back to the place where I am supposed to be. In any case it's rare that you start and end your career in the same place so maybe I will go to another label at some point or maybe I'll stay here forever, you just don't know. I think that's what's so exciting about it – you never know what is going to happen.



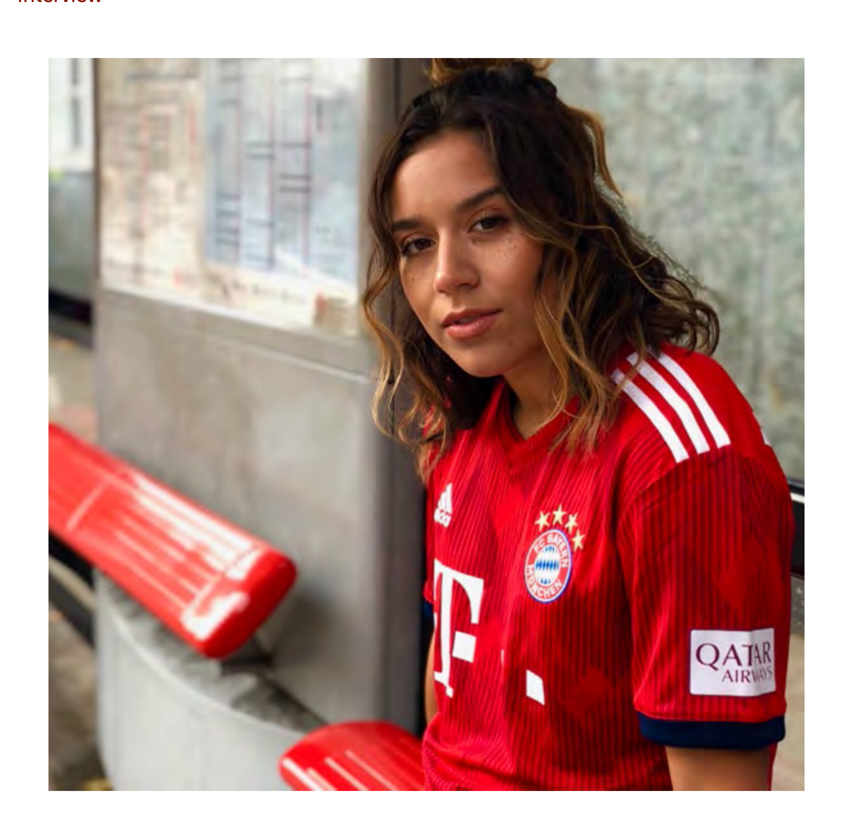
**Your first songwriting credit was for no less a superstar than Kylie Minogue with *Million Miles*...**
It's kind of like scoring your first goal in the Champions League! Since then I've written widely for a lot of well-known names.

**And what was it like writing for Dua Lipa who entertained Reds fans before the Champions League final in Kiev?**
I wrote the last song that she released called *Kiss and Make Up*. It was awesome to see that released and she kind of became an LFC mascot in Kiev.

I was with her recently and we were looking at all the videos from the final and seeing all the fans singing her songs. She was just like, 'I would never have imagined in my wildest dreams that that would have happened'. I said to her, 'Yes well, it's because we're Scousers and we're good people and we know good music!' Dua's manager Ben is a big Liverpool fan so every time we hang out we talk about the Reds – we don't talk a thing about music to be honest!

Unfortunately I didn't get to the Champions League final as I was writing in Copenhagen so I missed the chance to go but there will be another time, 100 per cent, and that time we'll win it!

**There have been a number of concerts announced for Anfield in June – is it an ambition of yours to play a gig in front of the Kop?**
For sure, that's definitely on the dream list. Pink has been confirmed and she's actually on my record label so you never know, there might be a little slot for me!




**Your debut single *Just Like That* gained over 100,000 views on YouTube within 24 hours of being uploaded...**
The way music is with Spotify now means it's completely different. It's not like you put a single out and you have everyone at the record label pushing it to get in the top 10 anymore. With Spotify you're putting music out there and you're just letting the public consume it and take it in.

Because I write songs for so many different people, that's just one side of my personality and the next record I'll be releasing is completely different again. I'm just taking each day as it comes and enjoying being part of the next generation of not being defined by one thing, hence why I make music and play football.

I'm never going to box myself in and say, 'That's what I am and I'm this kind of artist'. I feel that I'm just making music, changing and going with the flow and seeing what I'm feeling like. I think every record is going to be different.

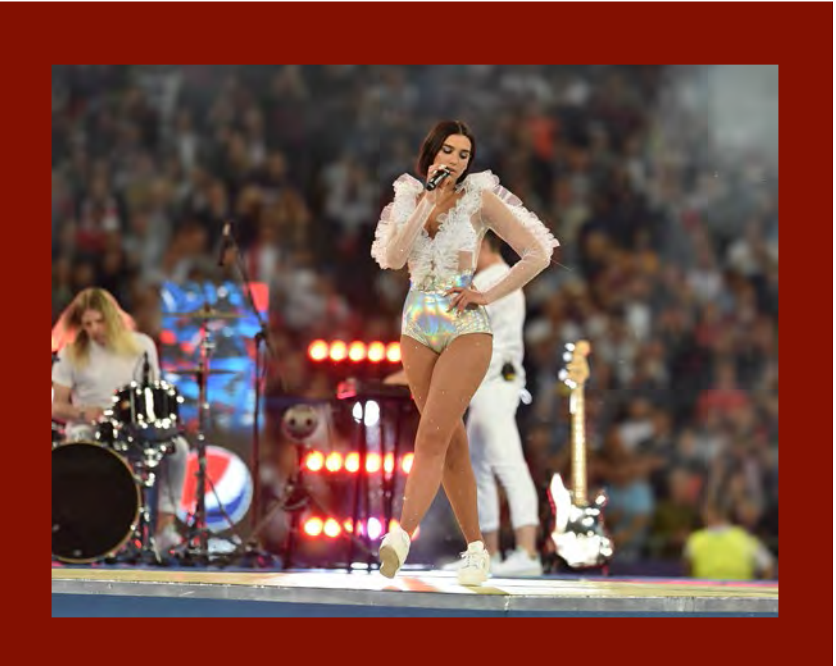
**Tell us about the album you're working on for later this year...**
It will be this year but again things have changed. Some people release two songs and then there's an album, while some people release 18 songs and then there's an album. The plan for 2019 is more music, and hopefully being more involved in football and doing TV work because I am the only girl out there at the moment who does pop music and also plays football at a good level.

You turn on Sky nowadays and you see Alex Scott sitting with Jamie Redknapp and I think that's brilliant. The women's game is booming so I'm just hoping it continues to grow and then hopefully there might be two girls in the studio and two WSL games on TV each weekend instead of one.

I want to combine my music and football a lot more and try and get the word out a lot more for women's football and get more fans on board so more people know who Chelcee Grimes is before the album comes out.

## JUST LIKE THAT...

By the age of 18 she'd already shared the stage with Tinie Tempah and Jessie J, and last year she signed a global deal with RCA Records. You can see the videos of Chelcee's first two solo records *Just Like That* and *I Need A Night Out* on YouTube. Her writing credits include songs for Kylie Minogue (*Million Miles*), BOA (*First Time*), The Saturdays (*Walking Through The Desert*), Louisa Johnson (*So Good*), Taeyeon (*11:11*), Olly Murs (*Deeper*), Dua Lipa, pictured right (*Bad Together*/*Dreams*/*Kiss and Make Up*), plus Tom Walker and Zara Larsson (*Now You're Gone*). She also scores goals for Fulham Ladies!



# SILVERWARE IN STUTTGART

Young Reds start new year on a high by beating top European opposition to land prestigious indoor trophy in Germany





# Mercedes-Benz Junior Cup 2019

**Liverpool Under-18s landed the club's first silverware of 2019 when they recently triumphed in the Mercedes-Benz Junior Cup in Stuttgart.**

The young Reds travelled to Stuttgart to take part in the prestigious two-day indoor tournament and qualified for the semi-finals by advancing through the group stage.

After losing 4-3 at Atalanta United in their opening pool match, coach Barry Lewtas' side responded strongly to register victories over VfB Stuttgart and FC Schalke 04. Hosts Stuttgart were defeated 1-0 courtesy of a goal from defender Jack Walls, before strikes from midfielder Elijah Dixon-Bonner and forward Fidel O'Rourke saw off Schalke 2-1.

Another German opponent, Bayern Munich, awaited in the semi-final and striker Jack Bearne netted decisively to book Liverpool's spot in the final against Rapid Vienna with a 1-0 win.

The Austrians opened the scoring in the showpiece game, but midfielder Abdi Sharif, defender Remi Savage and another goal from O'Rourke gave the Reds a 3-1 advantage before Rapid made it 3-2 in the final analysis.

Reflecting on the tournament victory, Lewtas said: "It's fantastic to win it and the boys did the club proud. We had a young team out there but they stuck at it and we showed what we are about. It was a brilliant experience for them and we are delighted with the boys.

"Vitezslav Jaros was named goalkeeper of the tournament and that was a nice reward for the progress he is making under [goalkeeping coach] Neil Edwards."

Back home another member of Barry Lewtas' Under-18s squad to create headlines early in the new year is defender Ki-Jana Hoever.

The Dutch defender, who joined the Reds from Ajax earlier this season, became the third-youngest player to debut for Liverpool, after being introduced as a substitute for Dejan Lovren just six minutes into the FA Cup third-round tie against Wolverhampton Wanderers.

In doing so, Hoever set a new club record as the youngest player ever to feature for Liverpool in the FA Cup, aged 16 years and 354 days. Only Jerome Sinclair (16 years and six days) and Jack Robinson (16 years and 250 days) have been younger in representing the Reds at first-team level.

Manager Jürgen Klopp said of the teenager: "It doesn't make sense to bring in a 16-year-old boy from the start. You wait until he is completely ready, but he did well. He came on and did well. That's how it sometimes starts – when you are really needed then it is only about if you are good enough and not how old you are. He did well, so that was all okay."

The tie at Molineux also saw two other members of Lewtas' UEFA Youth League squad, Rafa Camacho and Curtis Jones, make their debuts for the club with both being named in Klopp's starting line-up. Midfielder Isaac Christie-Davies was an unused substitute on the night.



# Getting to Anfield

Public transport: the quick and convenient way to the match

## Get the bus

On matchday the 917 express bus runs direct from Liverpool city centre to Anfield every 10 minutes. There is a discounted ticket price of £4, with fans receiving a discount on soft drinks at LFC kiosks within the stadium on presentation of their return-ticket.

The Soccerbus will be operating three hours prior to kick-off and up to 90 minutes after the final whistle. A new family ticket (two adults + two children) is available for £7 and a group ticket (four adults) for £10. Soccerbus tickets can now be bought at any rail station by asking for a 'plus Anfield/Goodison' ticket.

Other bus services include the 26 and 27 from LiverpoolONE station and 17 from Queen Square. The 68/168, which operates between Bootle and Aigburth, and the 14 and 19 (from Queen Square) stop a short walk from the ground.

The 501 football service operates direct to Lime Street from Walton Lane for up to two hours after the final whistle. Adult £2, children £1.

The 502 also runs two journeys from Anfield after each home game to Lime Street.




## Trains and automobiles

Lime Street is two miles from Anfield and taxi fares usually cost £7-9, or buses go from nearby Queen Square. Merseyrail runs from town to Sandhills station from where matchday passengers can use the Soccerbus.

## Back of the cab

Taxi pick-up points are available outside of the stadium and on major routes. Taxi One operates a taxi-bus service from St Johns Lane, Liverpool city centre, direct to Anfield. A frequent service operates from three hours prior to kick off. Taxi One return-service operates from the corner of Anfield Road/Sleepers Hill opposite the Isla Gladstone conservatory back to the city-centre.

## On your bike!

The free LFC Cycle Hub will be located on Anfield Road for the 2018/19 season, allowing fans who cycle to the game to park their bikes safely and securely with an attendant.

## Walk on

Walking routes are signposted from Lime Street, Sandhills and Kirkdale stations to assist fans who travel to the game using local rail services.

## Get there early!

Avoid the crowds and get to Anfield early to enjoy the Fan Zones, located in Paisley Square and Anfield Road and open four hours before kick-off – ideal for meeting before the game to soak up the atmosphere.



*For more advice please visit www.liverpoolfc.com/gettingtoanfield*

# ANFIELD MATCHDAY TRANSPORT PLAN 2018/19 SEASON



# WHERE THE ART IS

We've got the boss on bricks on our doorstep while images of Liverpool's Egyptian King have appeared in streets in Europe, Africa and North America



**The mighty mural of Jürgen Klopp in Liverpool's Baltic Triangle is just the latest piece of street art with an LFC theme, with Mo Salah the muse on three continents.**

Here at home an "Ode to Mo' appeared on a wall just off Church Street in Liverpool's shopping district, created by poet Musa Okwonga and local street artist and Reds fan Guy McKinley, to coincide with last season's Champions League final.

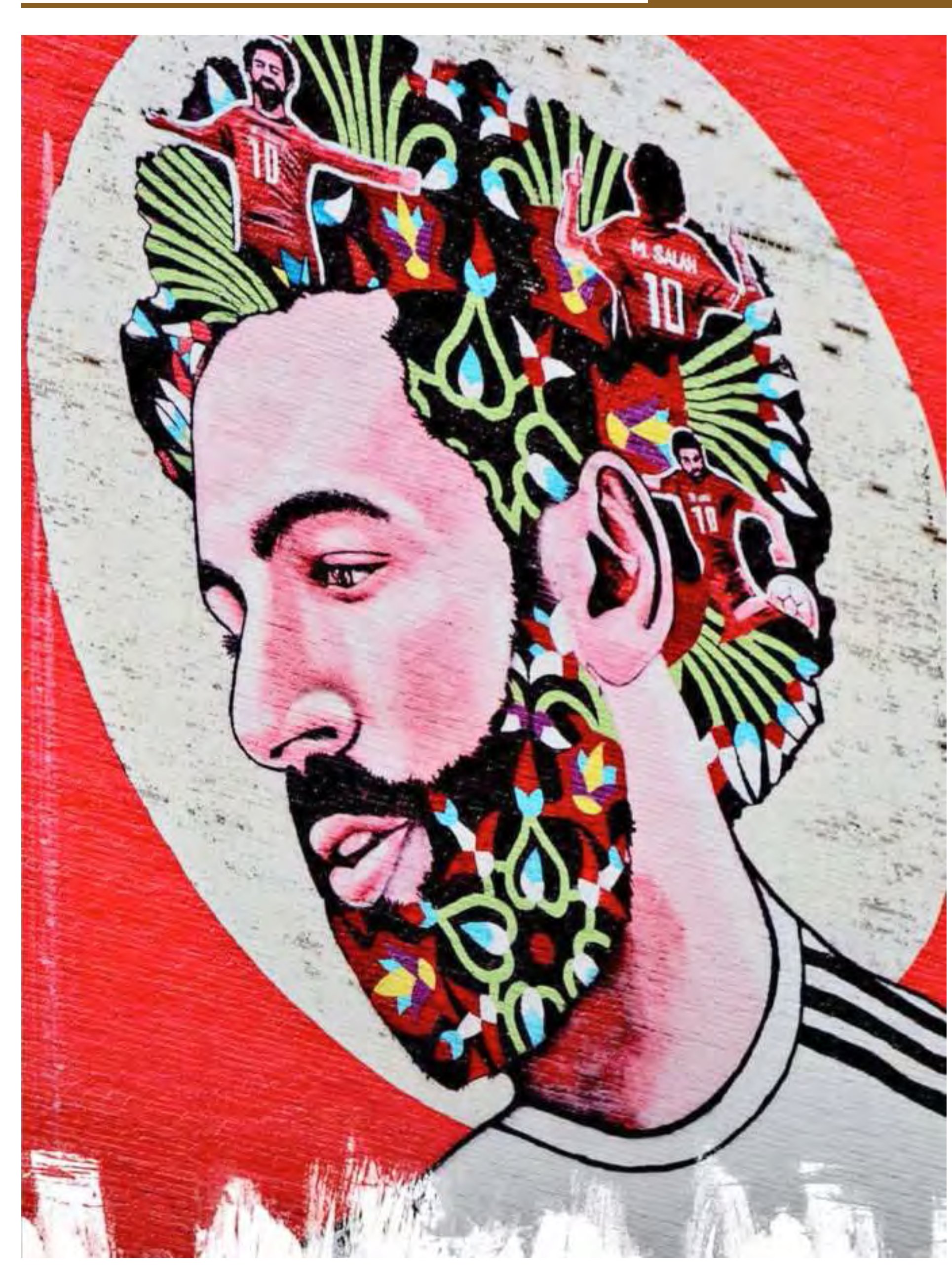
Meanwhile over in New York City a mural appeared on the side of a brick building in Times Square, depicting Mo's head and shoulders with colourful Egyptian patterns, along with miniature versions of him playing, in his hair and beard. American artist Brandan 'Bmike' Odums created the mural for the sports website Bleacher Report, as part of a celebration of World Cup superstars, and on a flying visit to the city Salah tweeted a selfie with it behind him. No surprise it went viral.

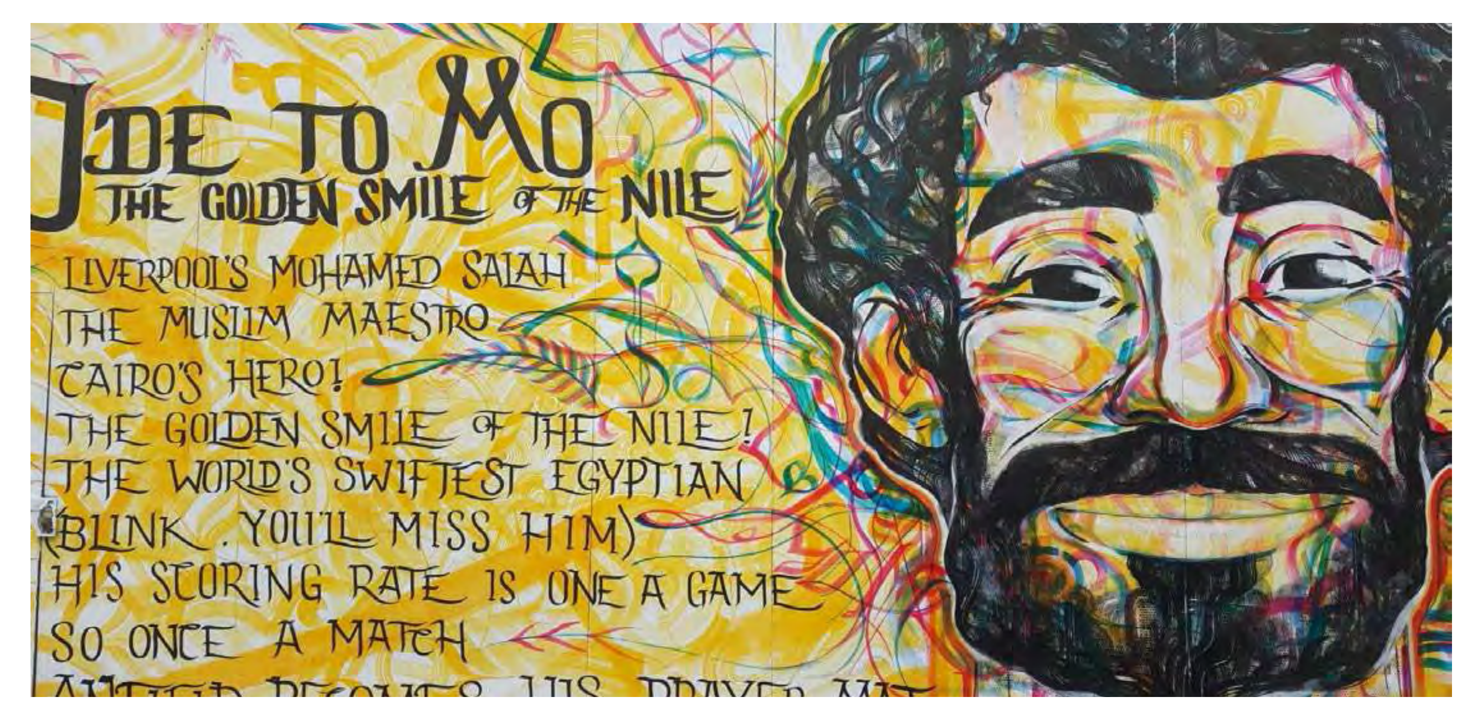
And finally in downtown Cairo, an image of the Reds striker appeared on a wall outside a street cafe as part of a project honouring some of Egypt's most iconic figures. The cafe owner later revealed: "It's become very popular. Everyone takes pictures of it: foreigners, Egyptians. So many people come to see it that I've even had to turn people away – I tell them Salah is asleep, he's having a rest."




THE BREAK WITH MICHELLE WOLF
MAY 27
GREGORYS COFFEE


SCHOOL of R
THE MUSICAL
SCHOOL of ROCK

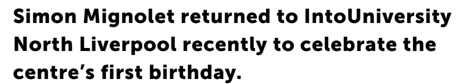

10
M. SALAH
10


ODE TO MO
THE GOLDEN SMILE OF THE NILE
LIVERPOOL'S MOHAMED SALAH
THE MUSLIM MAESTRO
CAIRO'S HERO!
THE GOLDEN SMILE OF THE NILE!
THE WORLD'S SWIFTEST EGYPTIAN
(BLINK. YOU'LL MISS HIM)
HIS SCORING RATE IS ONE A GAME
SO ONCE A MATCH

# MANY HAPPY RETURNS!




## Reds goalkeeper Simon is back to say hello as local higher-education scheme celebrates its first birthday



**Simon Mignolet returned to IntoUniversity North Liverpool recently to celebrate the centre's first birthday.**

The facility is a collaboration between LFC Foundation, University of Liverpool and educational charity IntoUniversity, and aims to help young people in Anfield to get into higher education.

In parts of North Liverpool where the scheme operates, the progression rate in to university is as low as 17.5 per cent – less than half the national average (37 per cent).

The centre partners with a selection of primary and secondary schools in the local area, supporting students aged seven to 18 with after-school homework help, one-to-one mentoring opportunities with University of Liverpool students, and delivering workshops on careers and university life.

In a successful first year the project exceeded all its annual targets, with over 1,100 local children attending to take advantage of the available support services.

Having attended the launch of the centre last year, Simon, who has a degree in Political Science, was keen to hear about its accomplishments. He said: "It has been great to come back and learn about the difference that the centre is making to local children, helping them with their school work and making them feel more confident about continuing education.

"University may not be for everyone, but all children should have the option and the support to get there if they want to."

• At Liverpool FC we are passionate about our community and our official charity LFC Foundation delivers programmes and partnerships to create life-changing opportunities for children and young people.

We also work with local residents, community groups and schools in the Anfield area, as part of our Red Neighbours programme, focusing on the key issues of food poverty and education, the elderly, getting the community physically-active and creating memorable experiences for youngsters.





# WHAT'S IN






**MENS 1/4 ZIP GREY MARL HOODY**
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**WOMENS RED YNWA TEE** (A12169) £20



**JUNIOR YNWA LAYERED TEE** (A12176) £15



**WOMENS CHARCOAL MARL ZIP THRU HOODY** (A12172) £35



**JUNIOR SWEATSHIRT BOMBER** (A12181) £25



**JUNIOR LOVE LIVERPOOL TEE** (A12180) £15

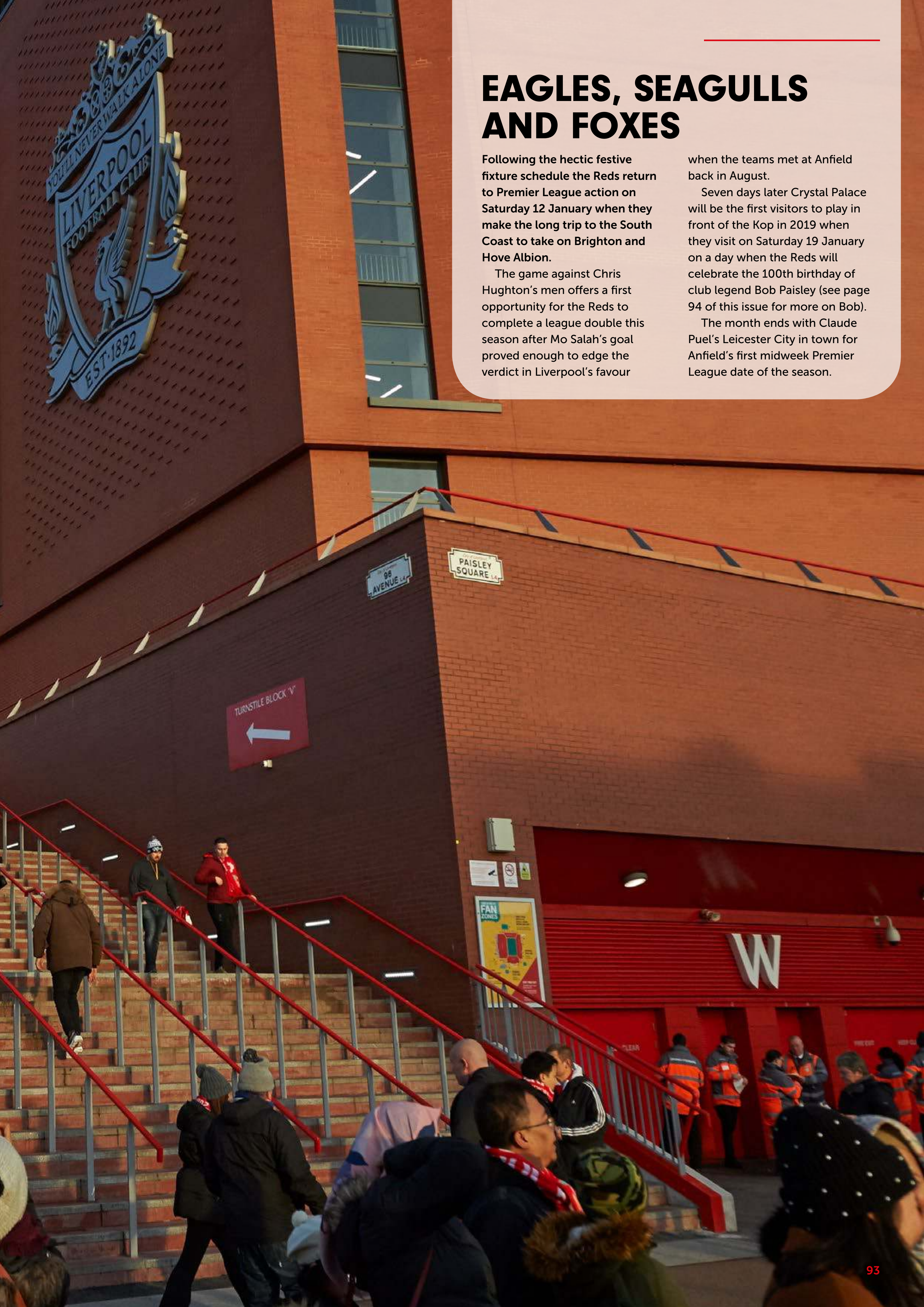


**JUNIOR GEO-BLOCK HOODY** (A12177) £25

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# What's On

## JAN/FEB




# EAGLES, SEAGULLS AND FOXES

**Following the hectic festive fixture schedule the Reds return to Premier League action on Saturday 12 January when they make the long trip to the South Coast to take on Brighton and Hove Albion.**

The game against Chris Hughton's men offers a first opportunity for the Reds to complete a league double this season after Mo Salah's goal proved enough to edge the verdict in Liverpool's favour when the teams met at Anfield back in August.

Seven days later Crystal Palace will be the first visitors to play in front of the Kop in 2019 when they visit on Saturday 19 January on a day when the Reds will celebrate the 100th birthday of club legend Bob Paisley (see page 94 of this issue for more on Bob).

The month ends with Claude Puel's Leicester City in town for Anfield's first midweek Premier League date of the season.

JAN/FEB

What's On

# LEGENDS TO SALUTE BOB PAISLEY

The remarkable career of Liverpool FC's iconic manager Bob Paisley will be celebrated on stage in a show to mark the centenary of the great man's birth.

Four of his legendary players – Ian Callaghan, Jimmy Case, Alan Kennedy and Phil Neal – will join biographer John Keith and Wirral singer Ian Ross at New Brighton Floral Pavilion in The Bob Paisley 100th Anniversary Show on Thursday 31 January.

The evening celebrates the life of Paisley through the recollections of his former players accompanied by exclusive audio and video clips and a selection of great songs from Ian.

Tickets can be booked online at **floralpavilion.com** or by calling **0151 666 0000**.



## ALL THOSE YEARS AGO...

**11 years since defender Martin Skrtel signed for Liverpool on 11 January 2008**
**41 years since midfield general Graeme Souness made his Reds debut on 14 January 1978**
**22 years since defender Jamie Carragher scored his first LFC goal on 18 January 1997**
**11 years since midfielder Lucas scored his first goal for Liverpool on 26 January 2008**
**32 years since centre-forward John Aldridge joined the Reds on 27 January 1989.**

**And it's 100 years since Bob Paisley was born on 23 January 1919 – a matter of months after the end of the First World War.**

Bob was a key player in the Liverpool side that lifted the first post-war League title, in season 1946/47, before beginning a backroom journey first as a renowned physio, then coach, then Bill Shankly's right-hand man before reluctantly stepping into the hot seat in 1974.

He even told the players at his first team-talk in charge: "I'm only here until the club gets a proper manager."

Twenty trophies in nine seasons was not bad in the circumstances. But then, that was the reluctant genius that was Paisley– the man given the unenviable task of succeeding the legendary Shanks.

Bob, a humble son of the North East, was always more at ease in the wings rather than centre-stage, but when it came to knowledge of the game and the ability to spot a player his record spoke volumes.

Kenny Dalglish, Alan Hansen, Graeme Souness, Alan Kennedy, Ronnie Whelan, Ian Rush and Mark Lawrenson were just some of the players brought to Anfield during Bob's time in charge and each went on to become a club legend in their own right.

In the process, three European Cups, six league championships, three League Cups and one UEFA Cup were added to the Anfield honours board.

His achievements in such a short period in charge cannot be overstated, nor will they ever likely be eclipsed and he is quite rightly recognised as one of the greatest football managers of all-time. Thanks, Bob.



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Lucas Leiva 32 on 9 January

Ray Houghton 57 on 9 January

Emile Heskey 41 on 11 January

Alvaro Arbeloa 36 on 17 January

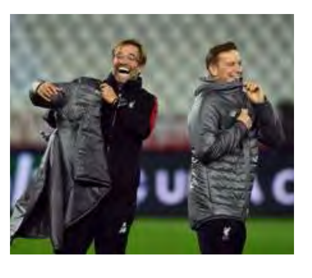
Peter Beardsley 58 on 18 January

Phil Thompson 65 on 21 January

Danny Ward 26 on 22 January

**Pep Lijnders (right) 36 on 24 January**

Brendan Rodgers 46 on 26 January



Jamie Carragher 41 on 28 January

Laura Coombs 28 on 29 January

Peter Crouch 38 on 30 January


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# Fixtures & Results

| | | SCORE/KO | TV | SCORERS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AUGUST** | | | | |
| **12** | **West Ham United (H)** | **4-0** | **sky** | **Mane 2, Salah, Sturridge** |
| 20 | Crystal Palace (A) | 2-0 | sky | Milner (pen), Mane |
| **25** | **Brighton and Hove Albion (H)** | **1-0** | **BT** | **Salah** |
| **SEPTEMBER** | | | | |
| 1 | Leicester City (A) | 2-1 | sky | Mane, Firmino |
| 15 | Tottenham Hotspur (A) | 2-1 | sky | Wijnaldum, Firmino |
| **18** | **Paris St-Germain (UCL, H)** | **3-2** | **BT** | **Sturridge, Milner (pen), Firmino** |
| **22** | **Southampton (H)** | **3-0** | | **Hoedt (og), Matip, Salah** |
| **26** | **Chelsea (CC3, H)** | **1-2** | **sky** | **Sturridge** |
| 29 | Chelsea (A) | 1-1 | BT | Sturridge |
| **OCTOBER** | | | | |
| 3 | Napoli (UCL, A) | 0-1 | BT | |
| **7** | **Manchester City (H)** | **0-0** | **sky** | |
| 20 | Huddersfield Town (A) | 1-0 | BT | Salah |
| **24** | **Red Star Belgrade (UCL, H)** | **4-0** | **BT** | **Firmino, Salah 2 (1 pen), Mane** |
| **27** | **Cardiff City (H)** | **4-1** | | **Salah, Mane 2, Shaqiri** |
| **NOVEMBER** | | | | |
| 3 | Arsenal (A) | 1-1 | BT | Milner |
| 6 | Red Star Belgrade (UCL, A) | 0-2 | BT | |
| **11** | **Fulham (H)** | **2-0** | **BT** | **Salah, Shaqiri** |
| 24 | Watford (A) | 3-0 | | Salah, Alexander-Arnold, Firmino |
| 28 | Paris St-Germain (UCL, A) | 1-2 | BT | Milner (pen) |
| **DECEMBER** | | | | |
| **2** | **Everton (H)** | **1-0** | **sky** | **Origi** |
| 5 | Burnley (A) | 3-1 | | Milner, Firmino, Shaqiri |
| 8 | Bournemouth (A) | 4-0 | sky | Salah 3, Cook (OG) |
| **11** | **Napoli (UCL, H)** | **1-0** | **BT** | **Salah** |
| **16** | **Manchester United (H)** | **3-1** | **sky** | **Mane, Shaqiri 2** |
| 21 | Wolverhampton Wanderers (A) | 2-0 | sky | Salah, Van Dijk |
| **26** | **Newcastle United (H)** | **4-0** | | **Lovren, Salah (pen), Shaqiri, Fabinho** |
| **29** | **Arsenal (H)** | **5-1** | **BT** | **Firmino 3 (1 pen), Mane, Salah (pen)** |
| **JANUARY** | | | | |
| 3 | Manchester City (A) | 1-2 | sky | Firmino |
| 7 | Wolverhampton W (FA Cup 3, A) | 1-2 | BBC | Origi |
| 12 | Brighton and Hove Albion (A) | 3pm | | |
| **19** | **Crystal Palace (H)** | **3pm** | | |
| **30** | **Leicester City (H)** | **8pm** | **BT** | |
| **FEBRUARY** | | | | |
| 4 | West Ham United (A) | 8pm | sky | |
| **9** | **Bournemouth (H)** | **3pm** | | |
| **19** | **Bayern Munich (UCL R16 1, H)** | **8pm** | **BT** | |
| 24 | Manchester United (A) | 2.05pm | sky | |
| **27** | **Watford (H)** | **8pm** | | |
| **MARCH** | | | | |
| 2 | Everton (A) | 3pm | | |
| **9** | **Burnley (H)** | **3pm** | | |
| 13 | Bayern Munich UCL R16 2, A) | 8pm | BT | |
| 16 | Fulham (A) | | | |
| **30** | **Tottenham Hotspur (H)** | **3pm** | | |
| **APRIL** | | | | |
| 6 | Southampton (A) | 3pm | | |
| 9/10 | UCL q-f 1 | | | |
| **13** | **Chelsea (H)** | **3pm** | | |
| 16/17 | UCL q-f 2 | | | |
| 20 | Cardiff City (A) | 3pm | | |
| **27** | **Huddersfield Town (H)** | **3pm** | | |
| 30/1 | UCL s-f 1 | | | |
| **MAY** | | | | |
| 4 | Newcastle United (A) | 3pm | | |
| 7/8 | UCL s-f 2 | | | |
| **12** | **Wolverhampton Wanderers (H)** | **3pm** | | |
| **JUNE** | | | | |
| 1 | UCL final | | | |










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# NEIL MELLOR

## We have the resolve and depth to overcome cup setbacks and injury blips

**We'll only know if Liverpool's FA Cup third-round exit at Wolves proves to be beneficial for the Reds' chances of winning the Premier League when it comes to the crunch in May.**

If we're all honest, Liverpool's Premier League season has so far gone better than anyone thought it could do. For too long talk about whether Liverpool could qualify for the top four has dominated conversations, but now we can talk about Jürgen Klopp's team as genuine title contenders, hence the suggestion that being out of the FA Cup can benefit the Reds in the league.

Liverpool will now have a free weekend before the first leg of the Champions League last-sixteen clash against Bayern Munich and the trip to Old Trafford in the Premier League. Perhaps that additional time between games will help in terms of freshness and when I look at the FA Cup it doesn't seem to have the same value as it did in times gone by.

Managers have been sacked after winning the FA Cup – Louis van Gaal at Manchester United, for instance – so although people say 'Liverpool have got to win a trophy this season' we all know that, ultimately, the Premier League title is the one we're after.

It's still disappointing to go out of the FA Cup, but if the Reds beat Bayern and United following a free weekend then the argument that it was beneficial will strengthen.

Wolves away was a tough draw no matter what starting XI Klopp had fielded – they've taken points off every top-six club in the Premier League bar Liverpool – and I wasn't surprised to see a disjointed display following all the changes. As a player it can be very difficult to come in for the odd game here and there and that will also have made it tougher for the three teenagers involved.

Rafa Camacho, Curtis Jones and Ki-Jana Hoever all made their Liverpool debuts and when you're getting your first opportunity as a young player you want to be lining up alongside the lads who are in the team regularly.

If Mo Salah, Sadio Mane and Roberto Firmino were all playing it would have helped Curtis Jones more than having Divock Origi and Daniel Sturridge ahead of him because they hadn't had a run of games so were trying to find their own form.

That was evident at Molineux, but I have to say that Hoever was outstanding.

He played alongside Fabinho, who hadn't played at centre-back for Liverpool before, with Camacho, who is more used to playing in attacking roles, at right-back and was impressive, just as he had been in the Under-18s and Under-23s, particularly in the mini-derby win at Goodison Park.

To win the trust of a manager like Klopp at the age of 16 is incredible and the fact that he has let the experienced Nathaniel Clyne go on loan to Bournemouth suggests he has a lot of faith in Hoever.

That's credit to him, but also a reminder to the other young lads at the Academy that there is a pathway to the first-team if you have the ability and the right attitude.

At 16 most kids are miles off being physically ready for top-flight football. We all develop at different rates and you can't compare yourself to others. I was a late developer. At 19 I was flying, but at 17 I was nowhere near ready, so young players have to remain focused on being the best they can be.

Hoever is ready but his involvement at Wolves, due to Dejan Lovren's hamstring injury, has led to talk of whether Klopp should bring in reinforcements before the transfer window closes.

However, he's got Joe Gomez coming back soon, Joel Matip to return, one of the best centre-halves in Europe in Virgil van Dijk to call upon and Fabinho, who can play at centre-back or right-back.

So, when I look at it, we are a bit light defensively at the time of writing, but is it realistic to bring in a player of the right quality who will remain in the team when Gomez is fit again? I just feel this is a short-term period of injuries that needs to be managed instead of bringing someone else in.




• Follow Neil on Twitter @NeilMellor33









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